



James Ellis  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

**MEETING** : OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
**VENUE** : COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD  
**DATE** : TUESDAY 18 JANUARY 2022  
**TIME** : 7.00 PM

**PLEASE NOTE TIME AND VENUE**

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

Councillor John Wyllie (Chairman)  
Councillors S Bell, M Brady, R Buckmaster, A Curtis, I Devonshire,  
H Drake, J Frecknall, M Goldspink (Vice-Chairman), D Hollebbon,  
D Snowdon, M Stevenson, N Symonds and A Ward-Booth

**Substitutes**

Conservative Group: Councillors D Andrews and I Kemp  
Green: Councillor Crystall  
Labour: Councillor Redfern

*(Note: Substitution arrangements must be notified by the absent Member to Democratic Services 24 hours before the meeting)*

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  - must not participate in any discussion of the matter at the meeting;
  - must not participate in any vote taken on the matter at the meeting;
  - must disclose the interest to the meeting, whether registered or not, subject to the provisions of section 32 of the Localism Act 2011;
  - if the interest is not registered and is not the subject of a pending notification, must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days;
  - must leave the room while any discussion or voting takes place.
2. A DPI is an interest of a Member or their partner (which means spouse or civil partner, a person with whom they are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom they are living as if they were civil partners) within the descriptions as defined in the Localism Act 2011.
3. The Authority may grant a Member dispensation, but only in limited circumstances, to enable him/her to participate and vote on a matter in which they have a DPI.

4. It is a criminal offence to:

- fail to disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest at a meeting if it is not on the register;
- fail to notify the Monitoring Officer, within 28 days, of a DPI that is not on the register that a Member disclosed to a meeting;
- participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which a Member has a DPI;
- knowingly or recklessly provide information that is false or misleading in notifying the Monitoring Officer of a DPI or in disclosing such interest to a meeting.

(Note: The criminal penalties available to a court are to impose a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale and disqualification from being a councillor for up to 5 years.)

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## AGENDA

### 1. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence.

### 2. Minutes - 2 November 2021 (Pages 7 - 22)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2021.

### 3. Chairman's Announcements

### 4. Declarations of Interest

To receive any Members' Declarations of Interest.

### 5. The East Herts Housing Strategy 2022 to 2027 (Pages 23 - 76)

### 6. Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (2022 - 2027) (Pages 77 - 172)

### 7. Exclusion of Press and Public

To move that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of Appendix A of item 8, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act of the following description: in that it provides details of a full cost breakdown of Electric Vehicle charging tariffs.

### 8. Introduction of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging tariffs (Pages 173 - 192)

9. Corporate Plan Refresh 2022/2023 (Pages 193 - 206)

10. Items for Information

(A) East Herts Health Hubs – Promoting easier access to health and wellbeing advice and support (Pages 207 - 214)

11. Committee Work Programme (Pages 215 - 224)

12. Urgent Items

To consider such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration and is not likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information.

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 2  
NOVEMBER 2021, AT 7.00 PM

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PRESENT: Councillor J Wyllie (Chairman)  
Councillors S Bell, R Buckmaster, A Curtis,  
I Devonshire, H Drake, J Frecknall,  
M Goldspink, D Hollebon, D Snowdon,  
M Stevenson, N Symonds and A Ward-  
Booth

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor P Boylan

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Scrutiny Officer
Amy Ditcham	- Policy and Projects Officer
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Jonathan Geall	- Head of Housing and Health
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Katie Mogan	- Democratic Services Manager
Jane O'Brien	- Senior Environmental Health Officer

(Residential)

208 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

209 MINUTES - 7 SEPTEMBER 2021

Councillor Snowdon proposed and Councillor Goldspink seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2021, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

210 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded Members that the meeting was being webcasted and they should use their microphones when addressing the meeting to guide the cameras.

211 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

212 PROPOSED EAST HERTS PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods submitted a report in respect of the proposed East Herts Private



Sector Housing Assistance Policy. The Head of Housing and Health said that the policy detailed the way in which the Council provided financial and other assistance to owners and occupiers of private sector housing within East Herts.

Members were advised that the report and the proposed policy set out how the Council could assist those in the private housing sector. The main shift in focus was moving away from a grant based system to a loans based regime and it was hoped that the Council could assist a greater number of residents through this policy.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods said that moving from a grant to a loan policy provided the Council with the ability to support much more vulnerable families. He said that this had been agreed as part of the budget process for 2021/22.

Councillor R Buckmaster asked whether Housing Associations were eligible to claim for the loans referenced at paragraph three of the report. Councillor Boylan said that Housing Associations were not eligible to apply for decent homes loans as these were intended to support vulnerable home owners where the property did not meet the government's decent homes standard.

Councillor Boylan said that housing associations were not eligible as they were subject to separate national arrangements whereby resources and other assistance was made available to them to ensure that all of their properties met the decent homes standard by the national target date back in 2010. He stated that since

2010, housing associations had become subject to the homes standard that had been set by the regulator of social housing. Councillor Boylan said that funding from Homes England was available to support business plans of housing associations.

Councillor R Buckmaster asked if the Executive Member could explain what was recommended for those who did not qualify for a loan, such as those in old properties who could not install cavity wall installation.

Councillor Boylan said that these new loans were intended to support the most vulnerable. There was a test of resources available to establish applicants who could otherwise apply for a commercial loan. He said that in this way the Council could focus its efforts and resources on those residents unable to pay for this on the open market.

Councillor Boylan talked about the test of resources and touched on the advice being given to residents if the amount the Council believed they could contribute exceeded the cost of the works. He said that the smaller homes insulation grants for loft or cavity wall insulation were not means tested and were made available to all as a relatively simple step to makes homes more energy efficient.

Councillor Boylan said that for harder to treat properties, including those with solid or non-cavity built walls, the Council would actively continue to advise residents of existing locally or nationally administered schemes. He talked about the regular monitoring of possible new schemes based on funding

made available from time to time from central government.

Councillor Boylan said that in the past national schemes had not always covered the full cost of works and in such cases the Council would consider whether it was appropriate for applicants to apply for a decent homes loan to top up the grant subject to means testing.

Councillor R Buckmaster asked whether this scheme covered properties which were listed and if so, did the scheme allow residents in listed buildings to make use of the scheme. Councillor Boylan said that there was no specific restriction preventing the owners or occupiers of listed buildings from applying for a decent homes loan. He said that planning or listed building consent might be required depending on the works that were required and these costs could be included in the total loan up to the £30,000 cap.

Councillor R Buckmaster said that the report stated that where family members were used to carry out any work on a property, the Council would only repay the material costs, not labour costs. She asked why this was the case.

Councillor Boylan said that in previous years, the Council had provided decent homes grants under powers outlined in the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. He said subsection four of section 37 of the act specifically prevented the authority from accepting an invoice from the applicant or a family member. He said this restriction still applied to disabled facilities grants although the

restriction had been removed from other grants and loans with the introduction of the regulatory reform housing assistance England and Wales Order 2002.

Councillor Boylan concluded that the Council had chosen to retain the restriction in order to maximise the probity of the use of its funds and of particular note, he said it might be difficult to determine the competence and experience of a family member.

Councillor Boylan said that should the Authority pay for works provided by a family member, the Council could find itself in the position of directly being a contractor of works and would therefore be deemed to be employing the subcontractors. He said that under the HM Revenue and Customs construction industry scheme, the Council would need to register with the scheme and deduct money from the payments to the subcontractor and pass this onto HMRC as advance payments towards a subcontractors tax and national insurance liabilities.

Councillor Boylan said that the proposed policy would however allow the Council to accept an invoice from a limited company where there was family involvement in the company.

Councillor Stevenson asked if the Executive Member could confirm that residents would not be penalised for those properties which were difficult to insulate. She also asked about what percentage uptake the Council expected to achieve in terms of those wishing to apply for insulation loans.

Councillor Boylan said that homes insulation grants

were aimed at assisting residents with relatively straightforward and lower cost insulation works. He recognised that some solid walled properties were harder to insulate and in such situations, the policy allowed for a potential combination of grants from national programmes with loans provided by East Herts Council. He said that in this way, it was anticipated that the Council could expand the reach of its advice and intervention.

Councillor Stevenson asked if the Council had spoken to other local authorities in respect of uptake numbers in terms of advice. The Head of Housing and Health said that Officers worked closely with partners across Hertfordshire in respect of these insulation schemes, in particular the South East Energy Hub was an agent for a new local authority delivery scheme.

The Senior Environmental Health Officer (Residential) said that in developing the policy, Officers had spoken to other local authorities in Hertfordshire and East Herts was broadly in line with other policies. She said that in respect of smaller insulation grants and in terms of uptake approximately £6,000 had been spent of the £20,000 budget.

Councillor Curtis referred to the decent home loans and said that he had noted that an interest rate had been set at 4.5%. He stated that there was no provision at all for that number to move up or down with interest rates nationally over the coming years. He asked if it would be prudent to have some way for the interest rate that had been set to track national interest rates.

The Head of Housing and Health said that Officers had taken advice from the Head of Strategic Finance and Property. He said that there was provision within the policy to modify the interest rate and this would be kept under review and any revisions would be publicised on the Council's website.

Councillor Goldspink said that she liked the introduction to the policy and in particular the reference to the District Plan and the wording that said that everyone was entitled to a decent home. She also referred to the link between good housing and health and how important that was.

Councillor Goldspink said that she liked the section of the policy that referred to the importance of energy efficiency and how the Council might address the poor efficiency of some houses by the provision of grants. She referred to the wording that stipulated that no applications could be accepted for works required to reinstate any dwelling designated as defective. She asked why.

The Senior Environmental Health Officer (Residential) said that sometime ago there was a major programme to address defective homes. She referred to subsequent legislation that prevented the Council from offering such grants when government assistance was available.

Members were advised that some post war properties that had been built rapidly were particularly hard to treat and would require more than the £30,000 that was on offer. The Head of Housing and Health said that housing legislation referred to specific types of

property that had been built with non-standard methods of construction and many of these dwellings were in the social housing sector.

Councillor Frecknall asked about the East Herts Housing Strategy for 2021/26 and the timeframes for the submission of various housing strategies to Council. The Head of Housing and Health said that the housing strategy would be submitted to the 18 January 2022 meeting of Overview and Scrutiny. He acknowledged how the differing submission timetables affected the Policy now before Members.

Councillor Boylan said that he had hoped to bring the housing strategy to this meeting but a view had been taken that further work was required. He said that the policy now before Members was captured within the new Housing Strategy, which would be coming to Council in March 2022. He suggested that an amendment be made to the policy with the word "proposed" being inserted in front of the reference to the "Housing Strategy".

Councillor Symonds asked roughly how many grants and loans had been given out. The Head of Housing and Health said that he would email Members with this information. Councillor Devonshire referred back to the points made by Councillor Goldspink regarding defective homes. He asked if the £30,000 loan could be used to repair a concrete framed house.

The Head of Housing and Health said that if there was a specific problem such as an issue with insulation that could be addressed by this programme than that could be looked at. He said however that the Council would

not be in a position to assist with a loan to fix a defect that was integral to the structure of a home. This could mean rebuilding a property from scratch.

Councillor Bell referred to page 13 of the report and said she was pleased to see this was going well and there had been some take up. She wondered whether the scheme could be expanded to include properties that were insulated prior to 2000 where asbestos might have been used with a material that met modern health and safety standards.

The Senior Environmental Health Officer (Residential) said that asbestos was often a concern and that asbestos was best left undisturbed where possible. However, as this could be a category one hazard it could be covered by a decent home loan rather than the £100 to £200 grant for insulation. She confirmed to Councillor Bell that the decent home loan would cover the provision of good insulation to avoid the hazard of a home with high heat loss.

Councillor Frecknall asked about the provision of small grants for emergency repairs. He referred to page 7 of the report and the reference to the repayment of capital by the recipient and asked for greater clarity on this as this sounded more like a loan.

The Senior Environmental Health Officer (residential) said that this small grant was included because it was often the case that some immediate emergency work needed to be done outside of the longer timescales for loan applications. She said that this grant would have no interest charged on it and was like previous grants which became a charge on the property.



Councillor Ward-Booth proposed and Councillor Goldspink seconded, a motion that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee supports in principle, the proposed new policy for private sector housing assistance, subject to the change in wording suggested by the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods regarding the inclusion of the word “proposed” in front of the reference to the “Housing Strategy”.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee supports in principle, the proposed new policy for private sector housing assistance, subject to the change in wording suggested by the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods regarding the inclusion of the word “proposed” in front of the reference to the “Housing Strategy”.

## 213 PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR Q1 AND Q2 OF 2021/22

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability submitted an update report regarding progress towards the 4 SEED themes set out in the Council’s Corporate Plan.

The Chairman said that emailed answers would be forwarded to Members in the absence of the Executive Member for Corporate Services. The Scrutiny Officer said that she would email responses from the Executive Members to Overview and Scrutiny Members.

Councillor Goldspink said that she was happy to support the noting of the report. She asked for a list of the acronyms in future as she had struggled to find the meaning of some of these in the papers.

Councillor Curtis said that the wording “digital be default” corporate priority when this should have read “digital by design” as per the SEED acronym. He made a general comment about the completion of actions and said that Overview and Scrutiny Committee had not had the opportunity to review these actions.

Councillor Curtis referred to fibre broadband direct to new developments. He commented that this would be in place for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town and he asked whether there was any clarity as to whether this would be provided for other developments.

The Chairman said that he would ask Officers to circulate some written responses to Members which would include the matter of contracts and overdue reports. He said that Members could email specific queries to Executive Members.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services clarified that the wording of “digital be design” had now been changed to “digital by default”. Councillor Devonshire asked a question about the Millstream Property Investment Business Plan and the wording in respect of purchasing properties. He sought and was provided with clarity on this issue. Councillor Bell said that she believed that the Council already owned the land in Watton at Stone.

Members received the report.

**RESOLVED** – that the update report be noted.

214 COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy submitted an update report in respect to of the Council's corporate communications activities, including recent highlights, performance monitoring, challenges and work underway to develop a new strategy and plan.

The Chairman said that there were some questions notified to the Executive Member in advance and he would ask Officers to circulate the written responses to Members. Members received the report.

**RESOLVED** – that the update report be noted.

215 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

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The Scrutiny Officer said that this was the usual work programme Members received at each meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee. She said that a number of substantive items had been delayed to the meeting on 18 January 2022.

Councillor Curtis said that he had requested an update report in respect of the healthy hubs and the role out of these.

Councillor Bell commented on the massive increase in complaints from residents in housing association

properties in her ward. She said that the communication between parties had been quite poor in recent months.

Councillor Bell asked whether it could be time to consider calling the housing associations in to attend Overview and Scrutiny to answer questions as to how they had been handling requests and complaints now that we were almost two years into the pandemic. She felt it would be a good time to see how the housing associations were meeting the needs of residents. The Chairman urged the Member to complete and submit a Scrutiny Proposal request form for further consideration.

Councillor Curtis commented on the possibility of a future agenda item in reviewing investment opportunities and initiatives in East Herts. The Chairman urged the Member to complete and submit a Scrutiny Proposal request form for further consideration.

It was moved by Councillor Goldspink and seconded by Councillor Ward-Booth, that the report in respect of digital exclusion be moved to the March 2022 meeting instead of January 2022 and that the report due to be submitted in January 2022 in respect of supporting vulnerable residents be made an update report only.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED. It was moved by Councillor Ward-Booth, and seconded by Councillor Bell, that the draft consolidated Work Programme be approved, as amended.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that (A) the main agenda items for the next meeting be agreed.

(B) the proposed Consolidated Work Programme, included at Appendix A, be approved as amended.

216 URGENT ITEMS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.52 pm

Chairman .....
Date .....

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## East Herts Council Report

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of meeting:** 18 January 2022

**Report by:** Councillor Peter Boylan, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

**Report title:** The East Herts Housing Strategy 2022 to 2027

**Ward(s) affected:** All

### Summary

- The current East Herts Council Housing Strategy for 2016 to 2021 now requires replacement. Therefore, a new Housing Strategy for 2022 to 2027 has been drafted to respond to new legislation, changing market conditions and evolving trends in housing need. This report outlines the evidence which has been taken into account and the strategic priorities and objectives which have arisen from the identified housing-related challenges.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:**

- (A) That Overview and Scrutiny Committee provides comments and observations on the draft East Herts Housing Strategy for 2022 to 2027 for consideration by the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods prior to the presentation to the Executive.**

## **1.0 Proposal(s)**

1.1 The draft Housing Strategy document, attached at **Appendix A**, has been produced based on extensive research and consultation. It is proposed that four strategic priorities, each with an accompanying set of objectives, will underpin the council's work over the timeframe of the strategy with regard to improving housing across all tenures and enabling more general needs and specialist affordable housing. The proposed four strategic priorities are:

- Strategic Priority 1: Deliver more affordable homes
- Strategic Priority 2: Enable a wider range of accommodation and support for our most vulnerable residents
- Strategic Priority 3: Enable high quality housing options for older people, better suited to their needs
- Strategic Priority 4: Improve the sustainability and quality of homes.

## **2.0 Background**

2.1 Although there is no legislative requirement to produce a housing strategy, a comprehensive housing strategy gives an opportunity for the East Herts Council to:

- ensure a co-ordinated approach to housing activity in East Herts, linking a suite of policies and strategies to deliver the council's ambitions
- maximise opportunities and resources to meet housing needs and aspirations, using council resources and partnership opportunities
- promote the role of housing in delivering corporate priorities and wider objectives including health and wellbeing and sustainable economic growth



- ensure that East Herts Council meets its housing obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and meets a diverse range of housing needs.

2.2 The East Herts Council Housing Strategy for 2016 to 2021 has now run its course. New challenges, however, have arisen for which strategic priorities and accompanying objectives need to be set. Evidence has been gathered which shows the district is experiencing considerable housing-related challenges including the need for a greater number of affordable homes, the need for a wider range of accommodation and support for our most vulnerable people, a greater range of accommodation for older people and improved sustainability and quality across all housing tenures.

### **3.0 Reasons**

3.1 As noted above, the council's existing housing strategy is now out-of-date. It is therefore imperative to produce and publish a new, revised strategy.

3.2 The absence of new housing strategy would arguably fetter the council's ability to enable and guide partners on bringing forward the number of type of affordable homes most in demand while also missing the opportunity to lay out to partners and residents alike the council's aspirations regarding sustainability and standards across all tenures of housing.

3.3 To this end, the proposed Housing Strategy clearly states the council's four overarching priorities, with a series of more specific objectives listed under each. The proposed priorities and objectives are as follows:

<b>Strategic priority</b>	<b>Objectives to address the priority</b>
Deliver more affordable homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase the supply of new homes offered with (a) social rents or (b) affordable rents at or very near to between 50% and 60% of market rents</li> <li>• enable a range of low cost home ownership products in the district</li> <li>• improve the focus on housing needs in our rural communities</li> <li>• assist households in accessing the private housing market</li> <li>• gather and publish up-to-date housing need and supply data</li> </ul>
Enable a wider range of accommodation and support for our most vulnerable residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work collaboratively with partners to maximise housing and support options for rough sleepers</li> <li>• explore the provision of supported accommodation for single people with complex needs</li> <li>• further develop services for households affected by domestic abuse</li> <li>• work with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) on the provision of housing for adults with learning and/or physical disabilities</li> </ul>
Enable high quality housing options for older people, better suited to their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explore and keep under review the changing needs and aspirations of the older population in the district</li> <li>• work with partners to bring forward high quality downsizing options</li> <li>• work with Hertfordshire County Council and other partners on expanding the range of housing options for older residents</li> <li>• work with Hertfordshire County Council and other partners to explore housing options that address the needs and aspirations of people with dementia and their families</li> </ul>
Improve the sustainability and quality of homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promote maintenance, insulation and energy efficiency of homes in all tenures</li> <li>• promote sustainable construction of new homes</li> <li>• promote good quality accommodation and standards of management in the private rented sector</li> <li>• encourage owners to bring their empty homes back into use</li> </ul>

## **4.0 Options**

- 4.1 Not produce a new, updated housing strategy – NOT RECOMMENDED. The proposed East Herts Council Housing Strategy 2022 – 2027 will provide a firm foundation for partnership working with registered providers and other stakeholders.
- 4.2 Revise and publish an updated housing – RECOMMENDED for the reasons laid out in this report.

## **5.0 Risks**

- 5.1 The proposed East Herts Council Housing Strategy 2022 – 2027 takes the form of information and guidance to its partners, rather than specific contractual obligations. Therefore, there is no risk associated with the production of a housing strategy.

## **6.0 Implications/Consultations**

- 6.1 The draft strategy has been produced following considerable consultation including:
- a public consultation in August and September 2021 which elicited a total of 118 responses
  - a stakeholder consultation with a range of organisations including parish councils, Hertfordshire County Council, East Herts Citizens Advice Services and Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce
  - interviews with eight key registered providers who develop and manage affordable homes in the district.
- 6.2 The development of the East Herts Council Housing Strategy was overseen by the East Herts Housing Strategy Member Working Group, consisting of eight members, which met on

three occasions to provide feedback to officers as the strategy began to take shape.

- 6.3 To ensure that this strategy informs the work of the council and its partners, detailed action plans will be drawn up for each of the objectives. These will be reviewed regularly to ensure that they remain relevant to achieving the objective. Delivery of the detailed action plans will be monitored closely and progress published.

### **Community Safety**

A number of priorities and objectives will aid community safety. Of note, *Strategic Priority 2: Enable a wider range of accommodation and support for our most vulnerable residents* will promote the wellbeing and safety of vulnerable residents living in the community.

### **Data Protection**

No implications.

### **Equalities**

The strategy has been drafted with reference to the council's obligations under the Equality Act 2010. It aims to meet a diverse range of housing needs, including those experienced by people with protected characteristics.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out for the draft East Herts Council Housing Strategy. Analysis has been undertaken of how each of the nine protected characteristic groups, defined under the Equality Act 2010, could be impacted by the housing-related challenges identified. An overarching purpose of the strategy is to attempt to mitigate or ameliorate these adverse impacts.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

*Strategic priority 4: Improve the sustainability and quality of homes* will be furthered by the following objectives:

- promote maintenance, insulation and energy efficiency of homes of all tenures.

- promote sustainable construction of new homes.

### **Financial**

There is nothing in the strategy which obliges the council to expend revenue or capital resources. Any future housing proposals with financial implications for the council would be subject to member decisions at the time.

### **Health and Safety**

No implications.

### **Human Resources**

No implications.

### **Human Rights**

No implications.

### **Legal**

Although there is no statutory obligation for local authorities to produce a comprehensive housing strategy, the information in the proposed strategy builds on information provided in other statutory documentation produced by the council, notably the council's Tenancy Strategy, Homelessness Strategy and District Plan.

### **Specific Wards**

No implications.

## **7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

7.1 **Appendix A** – the draft East Herts Housing Strategy 2022 to 2027.

### **Contact Member**

Councillor Peter Boylan, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods,  
Email: [peter.boylan@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:peter.boylan@eastherts.gov.uk)

**Contact Officer**

Jonathan Geall, Head of Housing and Health, Tel: 01992 531594.

Email: [jonathan.geall@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:jonathan.geall@eastherts.gov.uk)

**Report Author**

Email: Helen George, Housing Development and Strategy Manager –

Housing Services, Tel: 01992 531651. [helen.george@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:helen.george@eastherts.gov.uk)

## Appendix A

### HOUSING STRATEGY

East Herts Housing Strategy 2022-2027

Draft version at 31 December 2021

*Cover to be designed at the same time as the overall design of the final document once it has been approved by Council*

DRAFT

**Foreword** ..... 3

**Chapter 1: Introduction: a new housing strategy for new challenges** ..... 5

    1.1 The overall role of the Housing Strategy ..... 5

    1.2 The Housing Strategy in context ..... 6

**Chapter 2: The East Herts district** ..... 8

    2.1 A relatively prosperous district with pockets of deprivation ..... 8

    2.2 A growing population..... 8

**Chapter 3: The Housing Strategy in action** ..... 10

**Chapter 4: East Herts Council’s strategic priorities for housing**..... 11

    4.1 Strategic priority 1:  
        Deliver more affordable homes ..... 11

    4.2 Strategic priority 2:  
        Enable a wider range of accommodation and support for our most vulnerable residents ..... 24

    4.3 Strategic priority 3:  
        Enable high quality housing options for older people, better suited to their needs ..... 32

    4.4 Strategic priority 4:  
        Improve the sustainability and quality of homes ..... 37

**Chapter 5: Monitoring delivery of the Housing Strategy** .... 46



## Foreword

Since 2016, when the last East Herts Housing Strategy was published, the world has changed radically. The Covid19 pandemic, the climate change agenda, the UK departure from the European Union, advancing home-based technology and demographic changes all have major implications for housing needs, housing aspirations and housing supply in East Herts.

Our population is growing and it's no wonder – East Herts is a very attractive place to live. The Halifax Quality of Life Survey 2020 rated us the UK's Best Place to Live!

Given the benefits of living in our district, it's not surprising that demand for housing is very buoyant. At the time of writing, the average house price stood at just over £423,000, some 47% above the England-wide average. That fact alone suggests the need for affordable housing is high.

I'm particularly pleased that growth in the number of affordable homes in East Herts continues at pace. Along with our partners, we have enabled an increase of 10.2% in the number of affordable homes in the district over the last ten years compared with an England-wide increase of 3.4%, a really significant achievement.

However, our track record of delivery is no reason for complacency, especially when we know there are pockets of deprivation in East Herts and increasing numbers of households turning to the council either because they are facing homelessness or their current home is no longer suitable for their needs.

The East Herts Housing Strategy for 2022 – 2027 is based on a systematic review of evidence gleaned from a range of sources and partners including the comprehensive study of affordable housing in the district we commissioned from the Housing Quality Network in 2020.

The facts and figures reveal the different dimensions of need in the district but put simply, I believe the Housing Strategy demonstrates the need for four key priorities to:

- **deliver more affordable homes**
- **enable a wider range of accommodation and support for our most vulnerable residents**
- **enable high quality housing options for older people, better suited to their needs**
- **improve the sustainability and quality of homes.**

We have involved as many people and organisations as possible in developing this new Housing Strategy. I would like to thank everyone whose views and recommendations have helped to shape our plans. We value the relationships we have with our partners and look forward to working together to turn our aspirations into reality.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter Boylan".

Cllr Peter Boylan

Executive Member for  
Neighbourhoods

## **Chapter 1: Introduction: a new housing strategy for new challenges**

East Herts faces a wide and diverse range of housing challenges, some newly arising and some more familiar. Homelessness, homes in poor condition or with low levels of energy efficiency and an insufficient supply of affordable homes continue to pose challenges. We also see new challenges emerging due to demographic trends and changes, including the impact of the Covid19 pandemic.

This strategy is evidence-based and has been subject to extensive consultation including:

- a public consultation in August and September 2021 which elicited a total of 118 responses
- a stakeholder consultation with a range of organisations including parish councils, Hertfordshire County Council, East Herts Citizens Advice Services and Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce
- interviews with eight key registered providers who develop and manage affordable homes in the district.

### ***1.1 The overall role of the Housing Strategy***

Although there is no legislative requirement for East Herts Council to produce a housing strategy, a comprehensive strategy for the district provides an opportunity for us to set out our approach to tackling the housing needs identified. In this way, we hope this document makes clear how partners can work with us and what we aim to achieve together.

East Herts Council does not own or directly manage any general needs housing, as we transferred our housing stock to two registered providers in 2002. Without a housing revenue account, that is, an ongoing budget based on council housing rent net of outgoings, we are not in the position to easily develop affordable homes directly. Unfortunately, nor do we have significant sums to invest in the improvement of existing homes across tenures. In other words, we are enablers of new and improved homes rather than providers. This, however, has not diminished our appetite to address the housing problems our residents face.

The East Herts Housing Strategy therefore aims to:

- ensure a co-ordinated approach to housing activity in East Herts, linking a suite of policies and strategies to deliver the council's ambitions
- maximise opportunities and resources to meet housing needs and aspirations, using council resources and partnership opportunities
- promote the role of housing in delivering corporate priorities and wider objectives including health and wellbeing and sustainable economic growth
- ensure that East Herts Council meets its housing obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and meets a diverse range of housing needs.

## **1.2 The Housing Strategy in context**

The East Herts Housing Strategy 2022 – 2027 is part of a suite of housing-related policy documents produced by the council. This includes the following.

- **East Herts Council Tenancy Strategy 2021 to 2026** – this provides the framework for how East Herts Council works with its registered provider partners on the rent levels and the tenancy types which are offered in affordable housing in the district.

- **East Herts Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2019 to 2024** – this provides evidence on the actions which are being undertaken to both prevent and tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in the district.
- **East Herts Council Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2021 to 2031** – this details the way in which the council provides financial and other assistance to owners and occupiers of private sector housing within East Herts.

Further policy documents adopted by East Herts Council and Hertfordshire County Council which have particular relevance to the Housing Strategy include the following:

### **The Corporate Priorities for East Herts Council**

- The council's corporate plan has four priorities:
  - Sustainability at the heart of everything we do
  - Enabling our communities
  - Ensuring economic growth
  - Digital by default.

### **Assisting vulnerable people and households**

- Hertfordshire Supporting Adults with Complex Needs Strategy 2019

### **Planning and use of land**

- [East Herts District Plan 2018](#) – the District Plan (the statutory Local Plan) sets out the planning framework for the East Herts district for the period 2018 to 2033. The plan sets out the framework for new homes, new jobs, new facilities and infrastructure across the district.

### **Transport and Infrastructure**

- [Hertfordshire County Council – Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan](#) 2018 to 2031

### **Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability**

- [East Herts Council – Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document 2021](#)
- [East Herts Council – Environmental Sustainability Action Plan December 2021](#)
- [Hertfordshire County Council – Sustainable Hertfordshire: Strategy and Action Plan 2020](#)

- [Hertfordshire County Council – Air Quality Strategy 2019](#)

### **Economic Growth**

- [Hertfordshire County Council – Good Growth in Hertfordshire](#)

## Chapter 2: The East Herts district

The district of East Herts covers an area of 477 square kilometres (184 square miles). It constitutes around one third of the county of Hertfordshire.

The district has a dispersed settlement pattern that includes the five market towns of Bishop's Stortford, Buntingford, Hertford, Sawbridgeworth and Ware. Each town provides a range of services to the surrounding rural areas. There are also approximately one hundred villages and hamlets of varying sizes.

### 2.1 *A relatively prosperous district with pockets of deprivation*

East Herts is widely acknowledged as an attractive, prosperous and desirable place to live. This was confirmed by the award in January 2020 of the title of the UK's Best Place to Live in the Halifax Quality of Life index survey.

According to the survey: *"Known for its many popular market towns, such as Bishop's Stortford and Hertford, East Herts in the East of England achieves its crown thanks to strong exam results, high life expectancy, excellent health and happiness scores, and high average earnings."*

The relatively prosperous nature of the district is further reflected in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 in which all 32,482 lower super output areas (neighbourhood-sized areas) in England are ranked according to ten measures of deprivation. East Herts contains a total of 83 lower super output areas of which 35 (39%) are ranked in the 10% most affluent neighbourhoods in England.

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 also show, however, that there are pockets of deprivation in the district:

- 22 neighbourhoods are ranked in the 30% most deprived nationally in terms of barriers to housing and other services;
- three neighbourhoods are ranked in the 30% most deprived in terms of income-related deprivation.

### 2.2 *A growing population*

Population statistics show significant growth in recent years. In fact, the number of residents in East Herts increased by 8.8% during eight years to 2019, with some eight of our thirty wards seeing population growth in excess of 10%.

The numbers of older people in East Herts are growing. Population projections from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) predict that the numbers of people aged 60+ will grow from 37,317 in 2021 to 48,855 in 2035. The same population projections predict that the numbers of people aged 75+ will grow from 13,400 in 2021 to 18,917 in 2035.

In September 2020 a total of 7,180 European Union nationals living in the district applied for settled status. The highest numbers of countries of origin were Italy, Poland and Romania.

In September 2020, 11.1% of East Herts' working age population claimed disability benefits. This is compared with the 6.4% of the United Kingdom workforce who, in August 2021, claimed Employment and Support Allowance which is the main benefit for a person of working age who is disabled or has a health condition (*source: Department for Work and Pensions*). Our partnership working with Hertfordshire County Council will provide further evidence of the need for housing which is accessible for disabled people.

### Chapter 3: The Housing Strategy in action

From our analysis of the local context and our extensive consultation, we have identified four overarching priorities which will drive the strategy over the coming five years.

These priorities are so fundamental to addressing local needs that they will remain relevant over the coming five years.

The East Herts Housing Strategy will, however, need to be agile and responsive to the changing national, regional and local contexts for housing-related work over its five year lifetime as it is to be expected that new legislation, population trends and economic developments among other things will all pose newly emerging issues. As a result, action plans will be produced for each of the priorities and progress will be monitored and reported on at least annually.

#### *Housing Strategy priorities*

Strategic priority 1: **deliver more affordable homes**

Strategic priority 2: **enable a wider range of accommodation and support for our most vulnerable residents**

Strategic priority 3: **enable high quality housing options for older people, better suited to their needs**

Strategic priority 4: **improve the sustainability and quality of homes.**

In the following chapters, we will explore the issues relating to each priority in turn and describe what the evidence indicates should be the objectives relating to each one. The objectives will then inform a series of detailed action plans which will flow from this strategy.



## **Chapter 4: East Herts Council's strategic priorities for housing**

### **4.1 Strategic priority 1: Deliver more affordable homes**

The identification of the strategic priority to deliver more affordable homes is based on evidence from a wide range of data sources, including:

- the UK House Price index from the Land Registry
- the national Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)
- Office for National Statistics (ONS) data on market rents by local authority
- East Herts Council's records on the development of affordable housing for rent and low cost home ownership
- the 'Affordable Housing Provision in East Herts' report commissioned by East Herts Council from the Housing Quality Network (HQN) in 2020.

### ***The housing market***

Chapter 2 described the relatively affluent nature of East Herts. The desirability of the district, with its good quality of life and easy commuting distance to London, is reflected in local housing prices.

Reviewing median average house price data produced by the Land Registry quickly shows just how expensive the local housing market is.

Table 1 shows that property prices in East Herts outstrip those in the rest of the East of England region and, apart from flats and maisonettes, are significantly higher than the England-wide average. This confirms that East Herts is an area characterised by particularly high house prices.

**Table 1: Median average property prices at September 2021**

	East Herts	East of England	England
All properties	£423,177	£327,982	£287,895
Detached house	£796,834	£501,722	£447,617
Semi-detached house	£474,678	£334,906	£273,470
Terraced house	£383,561	£277,590	£236,797
Flats or maisonettes	£249,451	£204,995	£241,884

Source: UK House Price Index, Land Registry

Using the Land Registry data, it is possible to estimate the minimum level of income required to purchase homes of different sizes in East Herts. This is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Income required to purchase a property in East Herts**

Property type	Average price September 2021 - Source: <i>The Land Registry</i>	Min income required with 10% deposit and mortgage x3.5 of income	Min income required with 20% deposit and mortgage x3.5 of income
All property types	£423,177	£108,817	£96,726
Detached home	£796,834	£204,900	£182,133
Semi-detached home	£474,678	£122,060	£108,498
Terraced home	£383,561	£98,630	£87,671
Flat	£249,451	£64,145	£57,017

Source: analysis by East Herts Council based on Land Registry data and the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)

The key question here is – how do local incomes compare with the salaries required to buy a local home? To investigate this, incomes for East Herts recorded in the

national Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings have been analysed.

<b>Table 3: Local earnings</b>	
Earnings decile	Weekly median of gross earnings per individual
Lowest 10%	£399.00 £20,748 per year
Lowest 20%	£479.10 £24,913 per year
Lowest 25%	£506.30 £26,328 per year
Lowest 30%	£543.10 £28,412 per year
Lowest 40%	£611.20 £31,782 per year
Median average	£714.70 £37,164 per year

*Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) for full-time employment in the East Herts district 2020*

The survey shows that the median income from full-time employment among East Herts residents in 2020 was £37,164 a year. This is well below the income required to buy a property in the district even with a 20% deposit.

A household containing two full-time earners on a median income could afford an average priced flat in the district but not an average priced house. Of course, there will be less expensive properties that bring home purchase within the reach of those on average earnings. Comparison of the

figures in Tables 2 and 3, however, illustrates how difficult it is to purchase a home locally, especially first time buyers without significant equity built up in an existing home.

### ***The private rented market***

Those unable or not ready to buy a home for whatever reason, including because they are saving up to buy their first home, will typically look to the private rented market.

As house prices are high in the district, it follows that private rents will be too as private landlords typically set rents to give a certain return on their investment. This is known as the rental yield.

Nationally published rental property yield data are currently in short supply, possibly because of the impact of Covid 19. That said, the longstanding Knight Frank 'UK Residential Investment – Yield Guide' reports, for March 2021 (the latest month available), provides an average yield in 'Greater London Prime' areas of 3.5% - 3.75% and in 'South East Prime' areas of 4%.

Using median average rent data, it is possible to estimate the minimum level of income required to rent homes of

different sizes in the private rented sector in East Herts. This analysis is presented in Table 4.

Property type	Median monthly rent 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020	Minimum annual income at 30% of gross income	Minimum annual income at 40% of gross income
Room	£358	£14,320	£10,740
Studio	£650	£26,000	£19,500
1 bedroom	£800	£32,000	£24,000
2 bedroom	£1,000	£40,000	£30,000
3 bedroom	£1,350	£54,000	£40,500
4+ bedrooms	£1,680	£67,200	£50,400

*Source: Office for National Statistics Rental markets statistics in England October 2019 to September 2020*

It can be seen that incomes need to be approaching or a little in excess of average levels to afford all but the smaller private rented properties in the district.

### ***The scale of need***

There are currently just over 64,000 dwellings in East Herts. The Office for National Statistics' latest projection reports the district's population to be 150,745, with a further projected growth to 156,583 by 2030. This will itself lead to an on-going growth in the need for new housing. Alongside this, national planning policy guidance and government direction indicates the need, nationally, to significantly increase delivery to meet assessed need.

Analysis undertaken to inform the District Plan 2018 – 2033 concluded that East Herts' need for additional housing to 2033 is 12,200, with 34.4% of these extra homes needing to be affordable housing, that is 4,200 new affordable homes over the District Plan period.

The council's District Plan seeks 40% of new homes on all but the smallest developments to be affordable. Indeed, East Herts Council has an enviable track record of ensuring a good supply of affordable homes, when compared with the rest of Hertfordshire and indeed England as a whole.

**Table 5: Affordable housing numbers 2010 - 2020**

	Rented affordable housing – council and registered provider homes combined			
	2010	2020	Difference	% diff
East Herts	7,572	8,343	771	+10.2%
Hertfordshire excluding East Herts	77,641	79,889	2,248	+2.9%
England	4,029,084	4,166,276	137,192	+3.4%

Source: Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities

The national figures in Table 5, collated by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities each year, show that in the ten years to 2020, the number of affordable homes in East Herts, that is new build net of any sales, rose by some 10.2% to over 8,300. Over the same period, the affordable homes in the rest of Hertfordshire increased by only 2.9%, and 3.4% across England.

These figures are reinforced by high levels of affordable housing development in East Herts in recent years across both rented and shared ownership tenures.

**Table 6: Affordable housing development in East Herts**

Year	Affordable rented	Shared ownership	All affordable
2017/18	96	53	149
2018/19	116	105	221
2019/20	220	72	292
2020/21	104	135	239
All	536	365	901
Tenure split	59%	41%	

Source: East Herts Council development records

The analysis in Table 6 demonstrates that high house prices and private rents put considerable strain on the overall housing system in East Herts. Where a household is priced out of home ownership and even private renting, it is to be expected that they will look to the possibility of low cost home ownership or affordable rent from one of the seventeen registered providers with properties in East Herts.

So, it is important to consider, what forms of affordable housing are being delivered and what exactly is needed to address local needs?

### **Low cost home ownership**

With the exception of a small number of equity loan schemes, shared ownership is the dominant form of low cost home ownership in East Herts. Shared ownership aims to bring home ownership within reach of those whose incomes and savings are insufficient to buy a home otherwise.

The shared ownership tenure gives first time buyers and those who do not currently own a home the opportunity to purchase a share in a new home or resale property. The purchaser pays a mortgage on the share they acquire and then pays rent to a registered provider on the remaining share. Because the purchaser needs a mortgage for just the share they are purchasing, the amount of money required for a deposit is usually lower than when purchasing outright and the income required to make the monthly mortgage payments will obviously be lower than in the case of outright purchase. The purchaser has the option to increase the share they own during their time in the property via a process known as staircasing.

Table 7 gives data on the affordability of shared ownership in East Herts based on the average full open market values

of properties advertised for shared ownership in East Herts between August 2020 and October 2021.

**Table 7: Affordability of shared ownership properties in East Herts advertised between August 2020 and October 2021**

	Initial share of shared ownership property which is affordable*		
	1 bedroom flat	2 bedroom house	3 bedroom house
Full value of properties advertised for shared ownership	£240,000	£300,000	£415,000
Single salary at lowest 25% in East Herts	32%	21%	Cannot afford any share
One full time & one half time salary at lowest 25% in East Herts	69%	55%	29%
Single salary at East Herts median salary	65%	52%	23%
One full time & one half time at East Herts median salary	98%	79%	56%

\* Assumes:

- deposit of 5% of the value of share being purchased
- 25 year repayment mortgage rate of 4.5%
- mortgage capped at no more than four times gross salary

- rent payment of 2.75% of the unsold equity per year
- service charge for flat £100 pcm
- 40% of gross salary devoted to housing costs counted as affordable.

Table 7 presents the initial shares required to enable people on lower incomes in the district to access a shared ownership home. It demonstrates that the tenure is a useful means of assisting people in the district into home ownership, albeit only relatively low initial shares are likely to be affordable by many needing to buy a three bedroom home.

### ***Affordable rented housing***

Rented accommodation in the affordable sector is provided by a total of seventeen registered providers in East Herts. There are primarily two forms of such housing available which can be differentiated by their rent levels, either social rent or affordable rent.

**Social rent housing** is affordable rented accommodation with rents set in accordance with a government formula. The rent level will vary property-by-property as it is calculated according to the market value of the property, the size of the property and the local income levels in the

area in which the property is located. In East Herts, social rents determined by this national defined formula typically result in rent at around 50% to 60% of market rents in the locality.

**Affordable rent housing** was introduced 2011. Such properties are subject to a different mechanism for setting the rent. In this case, the registered provider may set a rent which, when combined with service charges if applicable, can be *up to a maximum of 80%* of the market rent in the locality. It is for the registered provider to determine the rent level, with the Valuation Office Agency overseeing the process.

The government's aspiration in introducing affordable rent housing was to afford registered providers a higher rental income against which to borrow as this would reduce their need for subsidy from the government (and now allocated through Homes England) thus reducing the call on the public purse. This was seen as a way of delivering more homes for the same overall amount of public subsidy.

At the same time as introducing affordable rent housing, the government enabled registered providers to switch the

rent for an existing property from a social rent to an affordable when it became vacant.

Unsurprisingly, different rent levels will have differing impacts on households with different characteristics. In 2020, the council commissioned the Housing Quality Network (HQN) to undertake a comprehensive study into affordable housing provision in the district.

HQN investigated how affordable the different rental products were for a range of different households. Key findings are presented below.

**Key to Tables 8 - 10**

- Y yes, the tenure is affordable as no more than 40% of gross income needs to be devoted to housing costs
- N no, the tenure is not affordable as more than 40% of gross income needs to be devoted to housing costs
- \* 40 percent of earnings/incomes, taking account of the impact of benefits and taxes
- \*\* Average social rent for the size of home needed and available between April and June 2020 (source: East Herts Council)
- \*\*\* Average affordable rent for the size of home needed and available between April and June 2020 (source: East Herts Council)

- ~ Two figures are used – shared room rate and one-bedroom unit rate
- ^ National living wage as calculated by Living Wage Foundation for the size of household
- ^^ Local median FT wage for year ended April 2019: £32,400 (Office for National Statistics [ONS] data)

**Table 8: Affordability outcomes for a single person**

	Maximum affordable cost *	Social rent **	Affordable rent ***	Market rent ~
Weekly cost		102.22	145.68	82.61 184.61
Under 35, benefits only	69.84	N	N	N
Over 35, benefits only	85.84	N	N	N
Government national living wage @8.72PH (per hour)	131.30	Y	N	Shared room only
Local average wage ^^	197.30	Y	Y	Y



**Table 9: Affordability outcomes for a lone parent**

	Maximum affordable cost*	Social rent**	Affordable rent ***	Market rent
Weekly cost		118.03	183.29	230.77
Benefits only	153.66	Y	N	N
Government national minimum wage @8.72PH P/T	188.82	Y	Y	N
Government national minimum wage @8.72PH F/T with childcare costs	171.33	Y	N	N
LWF national living wage@9.30 PH P/T ^	182.03	Y	N	N
Local average wage^^ P/T	205.77	Y	Y	N
Local average wage^^ F/Twith childcare costs	203.67	Y	Y	N

**Table 10: Affordability outcomes for a couple with two children**

	Maximum affordable cost *	Social rent **	Affordable rent ***	Market rent
Weekly cost		143.93	224.93	311.54
Benefitonly	166.94	Y	N	N
1 Person F/T at governmentnational minimum wage @8.72 PH	279.60	Y	Y	N
2 People F/T at governmentnational minimum wage @8.72PH with childcarecosts ^	306.47	Y	Y	N
1 Person F/T and 1 person P/T at LWF national living wage@9.30 PH ^ (no childcarecosts)	308.80	Y	Y	N
1 person F/T at local average wage ^^	306.71	Y	Y	N
1 person F/T and 1 person P/T at local average wage, no childcare costs ^^	348.68	Y	Y	Y

The analysis by HQN indicates a very mixed picture in terms of the affordability of different rent levels. Of note, single people on benefits will struggle at all rent levels, with the national living wage required to afford even a social rent.

The affordability of an affordable rent for a lone parent is dependent on hours worked and the need to fund childcare, while couples are better placed to afford affordable rents.

### ***Seeking to match supply to need***

#### ***Rent levels***

The recent growth in affordable housing in East Herts discussed above has coincided with the introduction of affordable rent housing. The vast majority of new affordable homes have affordable rents. This is because as affordable rents are higher than social rents, a registered provider can afford to borrow more and thus pay the developer more for the new homes. It is the assumed income from registered providers that developers build into their viability models.

The relationship between rent levels and borrowing and thus how many homes a registered provider can afford to buy from a developer also works in the reverse. Thus, if a developer was compelled to only sell properties to a registered provider charging social rents, the registered provider could not borrow so much because there would be less rental income to cover the borrowing costs. Thus, the registered provider could only afford far fewer homes than if affordable rents were allowed.

Put simply without additional subsidy, the system of providing affordable housing on private, developer-led sites can deliver:

- more homes with affordable rents ***or***
- fewer homes with social rents.

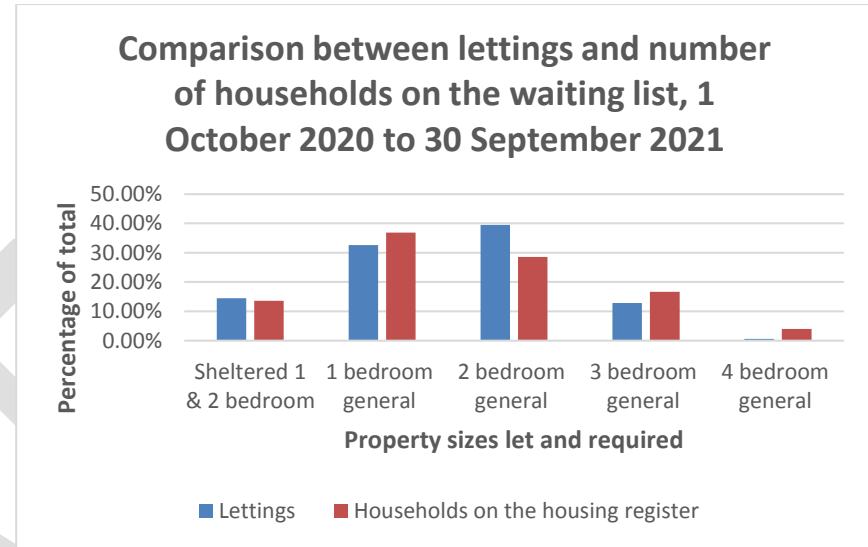
In overall terms, affordable housing built before 2011, and not subject to having the rent switched to an affordable rent when vacant, will have a social rent. Analysis of lettings in East Herts shows that over the 12 months to September 2021, the council nominated people to 522 vacancies in existing and new properties put forward by registered providers. Of these properties, 280 (53.6%) had a social rent and 242 (46.4%) had an affordable rent.

In summary, while there are both properties with social rents and affordable rents available in the district, there is clearly a need to preserve if not increase the supply of properties with a social rent so as to enable a full range of housing options for those unable to buy or rent privately and not in a position to buy a shared ownership home.

**Size**

East Herts Council’s housing register of those looking for affordable rented housing provides a key source of evidence about local need. At 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021, there were 2,152 households on the housing register, of which 1,856 require general needs housing. The remaining 296 require older persons’ accommodation which is discussed in Chapter 5 below.

The greatest need registered with the council is for smaller properties. In total, 43% of those needing general needs accommodation require a one bed property with another 33% needing a two bedroom property.



Source: East Herts Council

This evidence also shows that although one and two bedroom need dominates both the housing register and supply, the supply of three and four bedroom lettings falls below the proportion of those on the housing register requiring this size of property. Thus, to more equitably meet need, there is a requirement for an increasing supply of larger homes.

**Location**

Table 11 lists the location of general needs properties, these being non-specialist older persons’ homes, let in the

district during the 12 months to September 2021. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there are more lettings available in the five market towns as compared with the more rural parts of the district. Given the paucity of housing options in the district’s villages, especially to enable younger people to remain living near family members for support, there is a need to enable more rural development.

**Table 11: Location of general needs homes advertised through Choice-Based lettings in the 12 months to September 2021**

Property size	Total lettings	East Herts Towns*	East Herts villages
Studio	10	9 90.0%	1 10.0%
1 bed	175	126 72.0%	49 28.0%
2 bed	251	197 78.5%	54 21.5%
3 bed	87	66 75.9%	21 24.1%
4 bed	4	3 75.0%	1 25.0%

\* Bishop’s Stortford, Buntingford, Hertford, Sawbridgeworth and Ware

Source: East Herts Council

**Modern methods of construction**

Modern Methods of Construction are increasingly being promoted as a means of accelerating the delivery of housing, and notably affordable housing given the need for increased supply, as that the major components can be manufactured off-site.

East Herts Council is a member of the Hertfordshire Off-Site Manufacturing Consortium together with other local authorities and registered providers. The aim of the consortium is to amass a pipeline of affordable housing development for which an off-site manufacturer could provide homes at a lower price as a result of economies of scale.

While the council is not a developer of new affordable housing, we are keen to keep abreast of innovations in this area and promote new construction methods among our registered provider partners. Methods which are particularly promoted are fully modular pre-fabricated homes and timber frame homes. Modern methods of construction can provide the following advantages: a shorter time scale for construction and new homes which have a high level of energy efficiency.

## Objectives arising from the evidence

The evidence discussed in this section suggests that in order to address the strategic priority to **deliver more affordable homes**, the following objectives should apply for the coming five years:

- increase the supply of new homes offered with (a) social rents or (b) affordable rents at or very near to between 50% and 60% of market rents
- enable a range of low cost home ownership products in the district
- improve the focus on housing needs in our rural communities
- assist households in accessing the private housing market
- gather and publish up-to-date housing need and supply data.

## **4.2 Strategic priority 2: Enable a wider range of accommodation and support for our most vulnerable residents**

The evidence used to inform the discussion in this section has been gathered from the following sources:

- the council's records of homelessness applications
- the council's Rough Sleeper Count Autumn 2021
- Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency
- discussion with Hertfordshire County Council's commissioning teams.

### ***Housing options and homelessness prevention***

The council is legally required to assess and prevent homelessness in the district as part of the Government's focus on homelessness prevention. With growing affordability issues and consequently fewer housing options as discussed earlier in this strategy, preventing homelessness is an increasingly difficult challenge and one that needs to be tackled in several different ways.

There has been much research at the national level that demonstrates that homelessness has a particularly detrimental effect on people's health and wellbeing. Of

particular note, long stays in temporary accommodation can severely impact a child's development, education and health and well-being.

To address the issue of homelessness, co-ordinate the council's work to support homeless people and guide our partners, the council has adopted the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024. This strategy sets out the council's strategic priorities for reducing homelessness and rough sleeping. Our overall approach is built on:

- strong and effective partnership working
- early targeted intervention and advice to prevent the loss of accommodation
- effective action to relieve homelessness and sustain tenancies to prevent repeat homelessness
- protecting and increasing local housing options.

Despite the council's efforts, there has been a steady increase in homelessness in East Herts in recent years as various welfare reforms have taken hold and the opportunities to access the private rented market have decreased. Landlords can be fearful of accepting tenants in receipt of universal credit while the freezing of local housing allowance rates up to March 2020 meant that the

private rented sector has become increasingly unaffordable in recent years.



Source: East Herts Council

The council provides a range of services to help meet the needs of homeless people and those facing homelessness. This includes:

- offering rent-in-advance and deposits
- using Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)
- funding East Herts Citizens Advice Service to provide bespoke debt advice.

The council has 31 units of temporary accommodation, with two additional self-contained units currently being developed and due to be available from Spring 2022.

**Rough sleeping**

The rough sleeper count conducted each November in East Herts by the council utilising the Government’s methodology records the following number over the last six years.

**Table 12: Rough sleeping in East Herts**

Year	Number of rough sleepers recorded – annual count in November
2016	9
2017	3
2018	9
2019	15
2020	6
2021	5

Source: East Herts Council

The increasing trend in previous years appears to have been reversed recently which is likely to reflect the council’s efforts under the national ‘Everyone In’ and ‘Protect Plus’ initiatives brought in to protect rough

sleepers from the pandemic and subsequently provide more settled accommodation. As part of this work, in April 2021 the council opened its first temporary accommodation scheme specifically for rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping which is providing six much needed self-contained units for this client group.

**People with complex needs**

Hertfordshire County Council’s ‘Supporting Adults with Complex Needs Strategy’ gives the following definition of an individual with complex needs:

An individual with two or more needs affecting their physical, mental, social or financial wellbeing. This can include mental health issues, substance misuse, domestic abuse, homelessness, physical ill health, learning or physical disability.

The strategic priorities in this Complex Needs Strategy are:

- preventing and reducing care and support needs
- preventing homelessness and reducing rough sleeping
- helping to support people to remain in their own homes and connected to communities

- improving health and wellbeing and preventing ill-health due to homelessness.

There has been an increasing number of households approaching East Herts Council for assistance under the homelessness legislation who have two or more needs.

**Table 13: Increase in homelessness for reasons most closely related to complex needs**

Quarter	Number of persons asked to leave by extended family or friends	Number of persons leaving an institution *
April to June 2020	5	5
July to Sept 2020	8	6
Oct to Dec 2020	16	5
Jan to March 2021	12	5
April to June 2021	18	3
July to Sept 2021	14	6

\* Definition includes people leaving a hospital, HM Forces, HM prison or local authority care

Source: East Herts Council

In addition, the Covid19 pandemic has played a role in increasing homelessness among single persons living on a



casual basis with extended family or friends, otherwise known as 'sofa surfing'.

### ***Cuckooing***

At the same time as the rise in homeless people approaching the council with complex needs, there has been an increase in the number of homelessness cases due to 'cuckooing', that is, the practice whereby individuals take over a person's home and use the property to facilitate exploitation which can involve dealing, storing or taking illicit drugs. The person whose home is taken over is often vulnerable, with complex needs. The police have suggested that the number of train lines radiating out from London into the district appears to be leading to a comparatively high concentration of 'cuckooing' in East Herts.

Closure Orders, prohibiting access to a home, are typically put in place when dealing with this issue. This approach, however, can result in homelessness for the legitimate tenant of the property.

### ***Learning from providing accommodation for people with complex needs***

The number of households in temporary accommodation remains high largely as a result of an increase in homelessness approaches from single person households with complex needs. This includes those with mental health problems and/or alcohol and drug misuse issues, and those who have reverted to sleeping rough. The following statistics show an increase among households presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness for reasons most closely related to those with complex needs.

Recent experience of managing temporary accommodation projects for single person households in East Herts has demonstrated the need for housing schemes with a high level of support for the most vulnerable. East Herts Council is working with partner organisations to examine the possibility of a supported housing scheme with a number of stages: initial support, intensive support, transitional support, step down and move on.

## Domestic abuse

Table 14 shows the increase in the number of households presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness for reasons of domestic violence over the last 18 months.

**Table 14: Number of households presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness for reason of domestic violence**

Quarter	Number of households
April to June 2020	4
July to Sept 2020	19
Oct to Dec 2020	18
Jan to Mar 2021	16
April to June 2021	28
July to Sept 2021	31

Source: East Herts Council

Since 2019, the council has commissioned the Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) team based within Stevenage Borough Council to provide support and advice to victims and survivors of domestic abuse, and children living with domestic abuse. This includes providing help with housing and tenancy issues.

Over the last 12 months, 57 households have been referred to SADA for assistance and support.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 formalises the need for Hertfordshire County Council to provide accommodation based support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe housing.

The Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership has produced its Domestic Violence Strategy for 2021 to 2025. It contains the following strategic priorities:

- act before harm
- identify and stop harm
- increase safety for those at risk
- support after harm.

The strategy also seeks *'to ensure that all victims of domestic abuse have access to high quality safe accommodation pathways and support, including support to remain in their own home if it is safe to do so and if they choose to do so'*.

Detailed actions for each of the four priorities will be published in early 2022. East Herts Council will be part of the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board which will be

responsible for operational delivery through an annually updated action plan.

As well as accessing services via SADA, the council works with the Future Living charity in Hertford which provide counselling and support to those experiencing or having experienced domestic abuse.

### ***Learning disability***

The council works closely with Hertfordshire County Council to research housing needs and solutions for residents with learning disabilities. Work to date has identified:

- there has been an increase in the population identified as living with learning disabilities in Hertfordshire since 2016. This is due partly to the introduction of Learning Disability registers in GP practices, so more people are being identified as having a learning disability.
- the degree to which people are returning to Hertfordshire having previously been accommodated out-of-county is increasing. This is largely due to the Transforming Care programme introduced nationally in 2015 to reduce

hospitalisation of individuals with learning disabilities and accommodate them closer to home

- in East Herts, those with learning disability in most need of housing options are typically young adults
- there is an expectation that people with low levels of learning disabilities should be able to live in the community on a relatively independent basis and indeed people with learning disabilities are clear that they want their own independent home as shared housing is no longer so popular
- some supported housing schemes are no longer fit-for-purpose, particularly as they often don't provide self-contained accommodation
- there is interest among some clients and their families in the possibility of shared ownership.

### ***Physical disability***

Hertfordshire County Council is leading work on producing a new accommodation strategy for adults with physical disabilities. This is in recognition of the fact that some districts in Hertfordshire no longer have the right type and quality of supported accommodation, and that new housing solutions and different types of accommodation are required. The Covid pandemic has also identified gaps

in provision. East Herts Council is working with the County Council on this important matter.

The far-reaching research is covering:

- needs assessments for different types of housing and locations that meets the needs of service users who are disabled
- identification of land and other resources to promote development for people with disabilities. Of note, this element of the work includes those with mental health, learning disabilities or other complex needs who are able to live in the community
- the production of demographic and demand evidence to inform Section 106 planning obligations, housing market assessments and planning documents produced by each district council in Hertfordshire
- the undertaking of market engagement with the aim of bringing forward a pipeline of new and refurbished accommodation that is fit for current and future clients.

The council provides Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) via the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA). The two registered providers who received the council's stock, Network Homes and Clarion Housing, also contribute to the costs of adaptations for disabled people.

Since April 2018, at which point the HHIA took over the management of DFGs, a total of 239 Disabled Facilities Grants have been awarded to East Herts residents, 150 aged 65 year or over and 89 aged under 65 years. The most common adaptations installed through Disabled Facilities Grants have been stair lifts, level access showers, extensions, and other bathroom adaptations. The tenures of homes in which Disabled Facilities Grants have enabled accessibility measures to be installed are shown in Table 15.

**Table 15: Tenure of homes in which Disabled Facilities Grants have enabled accessibility measures to be installed, 2018 to 2021**

Tenure	Persons aged under 65 years	Persons aged 65 years and over
Owned	38 42.7%	106 70.7%
Social housing	47 52.8%	29 19.3%
Private rented	1 1.1%	10 6.7%
Tenure not recorded	3 3.4%	5 3.3%
Total	89 100%	150 100%

Source: Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency and East Herts Council

### ***Gypsies, travellers and travelling show people***

The East Herts District Plan 2018 to 2033 identified that an additional two pitches would be required up to 2022, with a further three required between 2022 and 2027. The District Plan identifies six sites within the district which are deemed suitable for the location of extra pitches.

In 2022, East Herts Council will be commissioning an assessment of the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers and travelling show people in East Herts.

Recommendations regarding planning for this client group will be made on the basis of this study.

### **Objectives arising from the evidence**

The evidence discussed in the chapter suggests that in order to address the strategic priority to **enable a wider range of accommodation and support for our most vulnerable residents**, the following objectives should apply for the coming five years, to:

- work collaboratively with partners to maximise housing and support options for rough sleepers
- explore the provision of supported accommodation for single people with complex needs
- further develop services for households affected by domestic abuse
- work with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) on the provision of housing for adults with learning and/or physical disabilities.

### 4.3 **Strategic priority 3:** **Enable high quality housing options for older people, better suited to their needs**

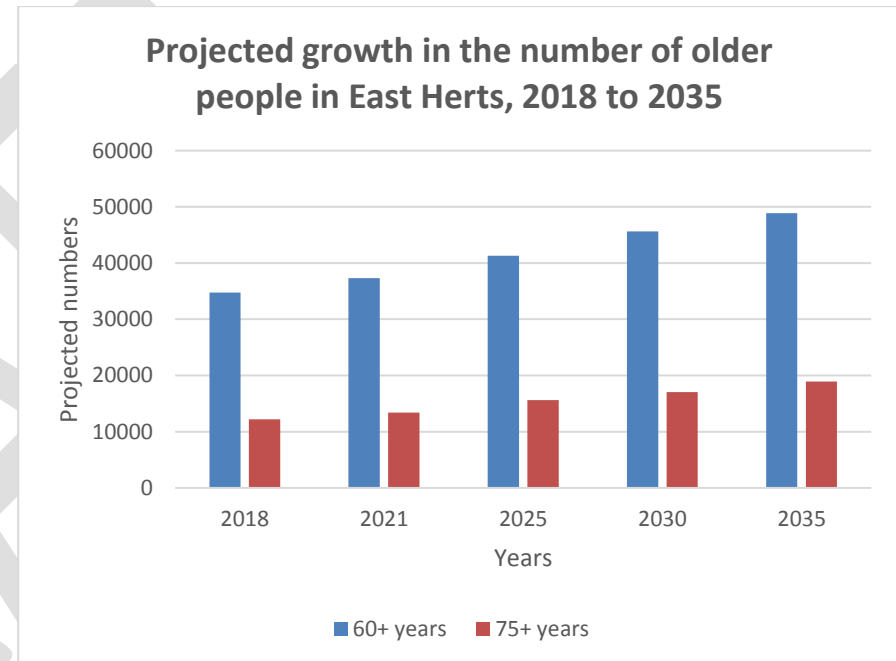
The evidence used to inform the discussion in this section has been gathered from the following sources:

- Office for National Statistics – population projections.
- Census 2011
- HousingCare.org – housing schemes for older people in East Herts
- Report on Under-occupation in East Herts – a review of the issues, challenges and possible solutions.

#### **Growing older population**

East Herts' population grew by 8.8% from March 2011 to June 2019 (*Source: Census 2011 and Office for National Statistics mid-year population estimates by age*). Over the same period, however, the growth in the number of people aged 60 and over living in the district was estimated to have grown by some 20.6%.

In the next few years, East Herts will see a significant increase in the number of over 60s and particularly over 75s.



*Source: Office for National Statistics, population projections*

It is therefore essential that the council addresses the housing and health of this part of our population to assist older people live fully independent lives for as long as possible.

The council has a key role to play in working with housing providers and the commissioners of services, notably Hertfordshire County Council, to achieve this by enabling the right mix of housing and communities. Such work will include:

- extra care facilities
- high quality options for older people wishing to downsize from under-occupation notably in the social rent sector and among owner-occupiers with relatively limited equity in their property
- dementia-friendly schemes
- increasing use of a wide-range of digital and non-digital assistive technologies.

There is also clear evidence of need for more housing which can be adapted as people's needs change, including Lifetime Homes and fully wheelchair-accessible housing. Such housing allows people to remain living independently in their own home as they age and become less mobile.

Building more purpose-built older people's accommodation to 'Age Friendly' neighbourhood principles will also help to combat loneliness and prevent slips, trips

and falls, especially if homes are step-free and in accessible locations close to existing communities.

### ***Housing and dementia***

With a growing older population and predicted rise in diagnosis rates of dementia, the council needs to continue developing positive interventions to support those affected.

The council is proud to have been accredited by the Alzheimer's Association as a Dementia Friendly organisation and we devote much time and effort to furthering understanding of dementia among our partners and residents.

There is a need for extra care schemes and other forms of housing to be developed to meet the needs of those with dementia.

### ***Existing accommodation for older people in East Hertfordshire***

Accommodation specifically designed and provided for older people in East Herts consists of six care homes, 11 care homes with nursing and 46 schemes of self-contained

accommodation of which 31 are owned and managed by registered providers as affordable housing.

Data held by the council on the allocation of existing affordable housing for older people indicates that housing schemes built in the 1960s and 1970s are becoming increasingly difficult to let, as they no longer meet modern day needs and expectations, particularly in terms of size and layout.

### ***Under-occupation***

The Census 2011 showed a high rate of under-occupation in East Herts among older age groups in terms of the number of bedrooms.

**Table 16: Under-occupation in East Herts**

	<b>Under-occupation by one bedroom</b>	<b>Under-occupation by two or more bedrooms</b>
<b><i>Age of head of household</i></b>		
Household head aged 50 to 64 years	29.7%	53.6%
Household head aged 65+ years	27.0%	59.2%
<b><i>Tenure</i></b>		
Owner-occupation (owned outright, owned with a mortgage and shared ownership)	34.8%	49.8%
Social rent	25.9%	11.0%
Private rent	36.9%	15.3%

*Source: Census 2011*

Research by East Herts Council has shown that providing downsizing options for older households who wish to move to a small home requires consideration of a wide range of factors, notably:



- the need for attractive and accessible smaller homes in the right locations
- financial incentives including help with, say, moving costs and decoration vouchers
- help with the moving process.

For some under-occupying owner-occupiers, the cost of a new, more suitable home, coupled with moving costs, outweighs the equity in their current home. A possible solution to this is Older Persons Shared Ownership, which enables households in relatively low value properties and/or with mortgages to pay off to move to a new home. Under this scheme a householder purchases just 75% of the home's value, with the remaining share retained by the property's owner, typically a registered provider or a local authority. The holder of the equity share would receive this as part of the Section 106 planning agreement. The purchaser is not typically required to pay rent on the unsold equity.

In December 2021, a total of 18 households headed by a person aged 60+ and currently renting their home in the social housing sector were registered with the council as they wish to move to a smaller property.

### ***Developing new accommodation for older people***

The council has worked collaboratively with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) on the County Council's strategy regarding housing for older people.

The key elements of this work are:

- a long-term programme to support people in communities (across Hertfordshire)
- bringing forward accommodation options which result in a decreasing reliance on nursing homes and residential care, for example, by increasing the provision of extra care housing
- enabling older people to access supported housing schemes in their own community where they can retain their support networks
- maximising the extent to which housing is future-proofed to meet the needs of people with dementia and/or mobility impairments.

The council has participated in work led by Hertfordshire County Council to produce design guidance relating to housing for older people.

East Herts is currently undertaking the following:

- devising plans, in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council, for additional extra care provision in the district
- exploring options to develop older persons' accommodation in the vicinity of existing extra care schemes to create a form of 'active older persons' villages' which provide a range of housing options for older people who wish to move to smaller accommodation.
- work with Hertfordshire County Council and other partners to explore housing options that address the needs and aspirations of people with dementia and their families.

### Objectives arising from the evidence

The evidence discussed in the chapter suggests that in order to address the strategic priority to **enable high quality housing options for older people, better suited to their needs**, the following objectives should apply for the coming five years, to:

- explore and keep under review the changing needs and aspirations of the older population in the district
- work with partners to bring forward high quality downsizing options
- work with Hertfordshire County Council and other partners on expanding the range of housing options for older residents

#### **4.4 Strategic priority 4: Improve the sustainability and quality of homes**

The evidence used to inform the discussion in this section has been gathered from the following sources:

- Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities: registrations of Energy Performance Certificates in East Herts
- Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities: Vacant Homes by local authority area.
- Office for National Statistics' population projections
- East Herts Council Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), March 2021
- East Herts Council District Plan 2018
- East Herts Council – council tax data

#### **National policy on sustainable housing**

In October 2019, the government published its [Heat and Buildings Strategy](#). The strategy states the following:

- the target will be for zero carbon emissions to be reached by 2050
- the installation of new natural gas boilers will be

phased out from 2035, and there will be no more fossil fuel heating systems installed in homes not connected to the gas grid from 2026

- future mainstream means of heating homes are likely to include ground and air source heat pumps and the use of hydrogen.

East Herts Council will continue to monitor closely all new initiatives for introducing new sustainable heating methods.

#### **Sustainability at the heart of everything we do**

In July 2019, East Herts Council unanimously approved the adoption of a Climate Change Motion which committed the council to, among other things:

- supporting the whole of East Herts District to become carbon neutral by 2030 and
- take actions so that the council itself becomes carbon neutral by 2030.

To this end, the council has established an ambitious [Sustainability Action Plan](#) which is a living document while

also establishing and servicing an East Herts Climate Change and Environmental Forum.

The East Herts District Plan 2018 contains a section on Climate Change which includes:

- recommendations on how homes in the district should be adapted to meet the challenges of a changing climate
- details of the mitigation measures will be undertaken to reduce carbon emissions
- guidelines on how the council will assess and permit the development of sources of renewable energy generation.

### ***Domestic properties' contribution to overall levels of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions***

We know that domestic properties in East Herts contribute some 15% of the total CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions of 674,000 tonnes in 2019-2020. Clearly, residential properties are a significant source of greenhouse gases and work to reduce these emissions will make a major contribution to local and national emission reduction targets.

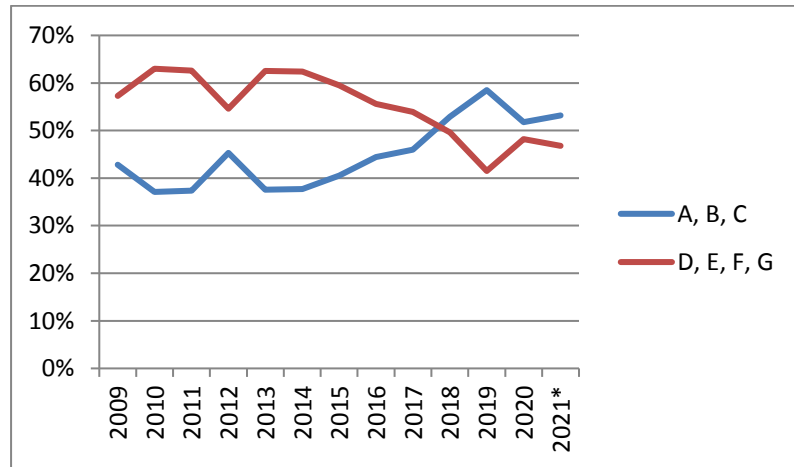
A SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) rating is the calculation that is required to predict the level of energy efficiency in a home. A SAP calculation indicates a score from 1 to 100 for the annual energy cost of a property, based on a number of aspects of the property. An Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) shows the SAP rating for a property. There are seven bands of energy efficiency, and an Energy Performance Certificate shows the band into which a property falls. Band A is the most energy efficient and band G is the least energy efficient. Of note:

- from April 2018, the Domestic Private Rented Sector Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard regulations banned private landlords from letting properties with an F or G rating
- in December 2020, the Clean Growth Strategy set a target for social housing providers to attain a minimum rating of EPC C for their rented stock by 2035 (2030 for "fuel poor" households).

The graph shows the percentage of Energy Performance Certificates registered for homes in East Herts between 2009 and 2021, grouping together A, B and C ratings and D, E, F and G ratings. There has been a steady increase in

ratings indicating a gradual improvement in domestic energy efficiency over the last 12 years

### EPC ratings in East Herts – 2009 to 2021



\* First three quarters of 2021

Source: DLUHC, Live tables on EPC registrations.

### Reducing emissions from social housing

East Herts Council works closely with its registered provider partners to monitor their energy efficiency programmes which cover their properties in the district.

Registered housing providers can apply to the government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund to

support the installation of energy performance measures in social housing. In addition, a national review of the Decent Homes standard for social housing is taking place between autumn 2021 and summer 2022. This will contain further recommendations on improving the energy efficiency of social housing.

### Reducing emissions from private sector homes

In 2017 the Building Research Establishment carried out research in East Herts to produce dwelling-level housing stock modelling on stock condition.

The research findings included:

- 23% of private sector homes had uninsulated cavity walls and 13% had inadequate loft insulation
- the SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) rating used to estimate energy efficiency in a home records an average rating of 58 (EPC Band D) for East Herts within the spectrum of 1-100 which indicates a medium average energy efficiency rating. This is comparable to the average for England (57) and the East of England region (57).

The council's newly revamped Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy makes provision for tackling poor insulation and conditions, most notably by offering:

- energy efficiency grants
- home insulation grants
- loans for Decent Homes works criteria.

East Herts Council will monitor the availability of government initiatives which could be used to increase energy efficiency in the district. The government's Local Authority Delivery (LAD) scheme aims to raise the energy efficiency of low EPC rated homes (those rated at E, F or G), deliver progress towards reducing fuel poverty, phase out high carbon fossil fuel heating, and deliver progress towards the UK's commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. East Herts Council has worked in partnership with Warmworks to introduce a new scheme using LAD funding. The scheme will offer assistance in the installation of energy efficiency measures to households whose homes have a D, E, F or G rating and whose annual household income is less than £30,000.

### ***Energy efficiency of new build housing***

The council adopted a comprehensive Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in March 2021 which sets out in considerable detail the expectations the council has of developers when they are seeking to make planning applications which are compliant with the energy efficiency and sustainability policies in the District Plan (the council's statutory local plan).

The SPD focuses on meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. High quality sustainable developments require adopting a holistic approach to environmental, social and economic sustainability. The SPD focuses on the environmental dimensions of sustainability.

The SPD points out that one key means of reducing the carbon emissions of buildings is minimising the carbon locked in construction materials, known as embodied energy. The council's District Plan requires that the energy embodied in materials is reduced through re-use and recycling and the use of sustainable sources and local sourcing. Consideration of embodied carbon is likely to

become increasingly important as society transitions to a low and indeed zero carbon society.

When sourcing materials for a development, developers should consider the following principles for improving the environmental performance of materials that should be used:

- environmental impact – use of materials that have low embodied energy, for example lime based products or timber, which have been manufactured through processes with low consumption of energy
- responsible sourcing – use of materials from sustainably managed sources
- re-use of materials – re-using materials from the development site and reclaimed or recycled materials for a range of uses
- transport – use of local materials to reduce transportation costs.

Consequently, the greatest opportunity for impact on embodied carbon comes at the design stage, in particular in the building structure.

The SPD goes on to describe in detail how new development can reduce the sustainable impact of building throughout their lifetime, notably regarding:

- energy use and carbon reduction
- adaptation to climate change
- water efficiency
- air and light pollution
- biodiversity
- sustainable transport
- waste management.

The SPD requires developers to explain how they are addressing each of these points.

It is recognised that the Environment Bill currently being considered by Parliament is likely, among other measures, to enshrine in law the need for developments to deliver a biodiversity net gain. The council, as necessary, will provide further guidance in light of the Bill being enacted.

### ***Energy efficient homes and Passivhaus***

East Herts Council wishes to promote housing schemes built to a high energy efficiency standard such as the Passivhaus model. There are five principles to the Passivhaus model:

- a superinsulated envelope to the home
- airtight construction
- high performance glazing
- thermal-bridge-free detailing
- heat recovery ventilation.

The airtight fabric of the building would allow a home to be heated “passively” by the sun, internal heat sources and heat recovery systems. Conventional heating systems would be rendered unnecessary, even in very cold weather.

Passivhaus has been popular in Germany and Scandinavia, however, building experts have expressed concern that the following may hinder widespread development in the United Kingdom: different construction skills, a lower level of understanding of building fabric performance, and a lack of legislative pressure, financial incentives and client demand. The council does not see these as prohibitive

barriers. We wish to see the rate of delivery of such homes accelerated.

### ***Housing Standards***

Since 2000, the Decent Homes Standard has been the target which all homes in the social housing sector must reach. Under the standard, all homes must:

- meet all the latest statutory minimum standards for housing
- be in a good state of repair
- be fitted with an acceptable range of modern facilities and services.

The government is producing a refreshed Decent Homes Standard. A review of the standard will conclude in summer 2022.

The conditions of privately owned housing are regulated by the following:

- the Housing Health and Safety Rating system which identifies a total of 29 hazards in the home
- the Fit for Habitation Act 2019 which defines the minimum standards for rented properties



- electrical and gas safety regulations
- the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) for the private rented sector, under which a property for rent must have a minimum level of energy efficiency
- the Housing Act 2004 (updated 2018) governing the conditions in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), including regulations under which an HMO must be licensed by a local authority.

In 2017, the Building Research Establishment carried out research into the condition of privately owned housing in East Herts. Its principal findings were:

- 15% of owner-occupied properties contained a hazard deemed to be category one (the most serious) under Housing Health and Safety Rating System
- 14% of properties in the private rented sector contained a hazard deemed to be category one under the Housing Health and Safety Rating system
- 26% of privately owned housing had un-insulated cavity walls, making the home less energy efficient

- 834 houses were in multiple occupation in the district, of which 168 were licensable under the new definition introduced in October 2018.

### ***Private rented sector standards***

The size of the private rented sector in East Herts more than doubled between April 2001 and March 2011, from 3,578 homes (6.9% of the total housing stock) to 7,446 homes (13.2% of the total housing stock). It is expected that the Census 2021 results will show further growth in the size and percentage of this tenure.

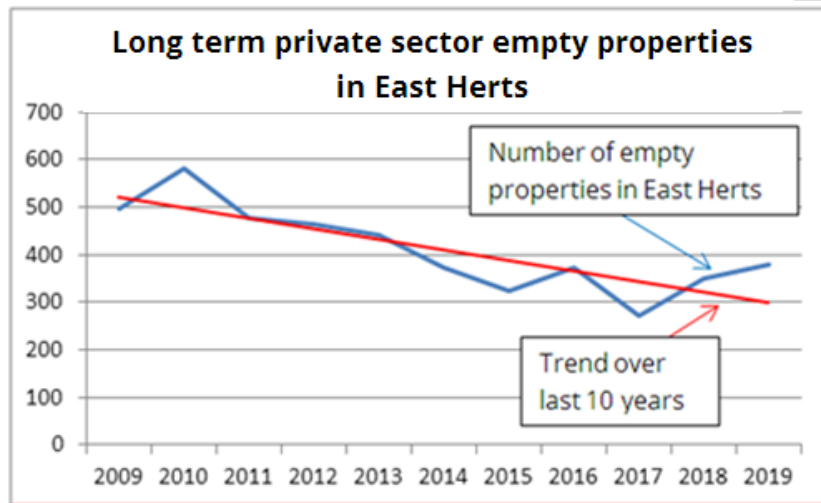
The council therefore has a keen interest in maximising the standard of these properties and the quality of their management.

Support, advice and enforcement work to maximise the quality of private rented sector homes is carried out by the East Herts Council Environmental Health Team. Between April 2018 and March 2021 a total of 64 houses in multiple occupation in East Herts were inspected and a total of 74 were licensed (although the Covid19 pandemic did limit the inspection programme in 2020-2021).

## Empty homes

East Herts Council recognises that empty homes are a wasted resource when housing need is so high while at the same time can be a cause of blight in neighbourhoods.

Government statistics record the number of homes in a local authority which are deemed to be 'long term empty', that is, they have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for at least six months and not subject to an exemption.



Note: Calculated from all tenure figure minus registered providers' homes which are not available for letting

Source: Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

The graph indicates a steady downward trend in the number of long term empty properties in East Herts over the last ten years, although there has been an increase again more recently.

Since April 2013, local authorities have been permitted to add a council tax premium to properties which have been empty for *two years or more*. It should be noted that properties empty for six months to two years, while counted as 'long term empties' in the official statistics, cannot attract a council tax premium.

East Herts Council first introduced a premium, of 50% on top of the full council tax due, in April 2017. The graph would suggest, however, that this did not have an impact in bringing empty homes back into use.

Subsequently, in April 2020 the council raised the empty property premium to 100% thus doubling the council tax payable on long term empties. Then, from April 2021, the rates were further amended. Table 17 gives the latest rates and numbers of homes empty for two or more years.

**Table 17: Number of homes empty 2+ years and resultant council tax premiums**

<b>Period empty</b>	<b>Number of empty homes</b>	<b>Council tax premium at April 2021 (on top of standard council tax)</b>
2 – 5 years	100	100%
6 – 10 years	45	200%
10 – 20 years	12	300%
20+ years	10	300%

*Source: East Herts Council*

As yet, it is too early to fully gauge the impact of these amendments, but it is hoped that these significant uplifts in the amount of council tax payable will prove an incentive for owners to finally bring their properties back into use, especially when combined with advice by the council and signposting to grants and loans.

On occasion, the council can access funds to enable direct action including, for example, the compulsory purchase of an empty property for onward sale. Direct intervention, however, is an action of last resort given the time and resources on the council to achieve this. The council tax premium is the main part of East Herts Council's policy toward long-term empty homes.

Of note, in December 2021 there were 117 properties in East Herts classified as second homes or holiday homes, that is, furnished properties which are not the owner's main or sole residence. Unlike in some parts of the country, the scale of second homes is not considered, at less than 0.2% of all properties, to be unduly skewing the local market and thus meriting specific interventions.

### **Objectives arising from the evidence**

The evidence discussed in the chapter suggests that in order to address the strategic priority to **improve the sustainability and quality of homes**, the following objectives should apply for the coming five years, to:

- promote maintenance, insulation and energy efficiency of homes in all tenures
- promote sustainable construction of new homes
- promote good quality accommodation and standards of management in the private rented sector
- encourage owners to bring their empty homes back into use.

## **Chapter 5: Monitoring delivery of the Housing Strategy**

This strategy has set out a series of wide-ranging priorities based on an analysis of the evidence available and views of our partners which in turn have suggested more detailed objectives that need to be addressed.

To ensure this strategy informs the work of the council and our partners, we will draw up detailed action plans for each of the objectives and these will be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain relevant to the objectives outlined. Delivery of the detailed action plans will be closely monitored and progress published.

## East Herts Council Report

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of meeting:** 18 January 2022

**Report by:** Councillor Eric Buckmaster – Executive Member for Wellbeing

**Report title:** Parks and Open Spaces Strategy – 2022-27

**Ward(s) affected:** All

### Summary

- This strategy replaces the outgoing Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and draws from previous parks improvements to outline the Council's commitment to parks and open spaces. It also sets out key areas of focus for the next five years.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**A) To review and provide comments on the strategy for the Executive to consider prior to Council.**

#### **1.0 Proposal(s)**

1.1 To review the updated parks and open spaces strategy following the online consultation with the public and Members. The strategy has been reviewed and amended to reflect feedback which represents the wider views of our customers.

1.2 To note the accompanying set of Operating Policies and Guidance which underpin that strategy and day to day operation. There were no concerns raised regarding these in

the consultation.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The outgoing strategy was intended to cover the period 2013 to 2018 and so is overdue for replacement; other projects were prioritised such as contract re-tendering then the pandemic presented further challenges.
- 2.2 A new approach to the purpose and delivery of this strategy was conceived. This was outlined in a PowerPoint presentation to key stakeholder groups prior to public consultation going live.
- 2.3 This new strategy reflects on the excellent improvements already achieved to our parks and focusses on key priorities for all our green spaces and how the Council intend to deliver them.
- 2.4 The draft document was launched for consultation during Love Parks Week at the end of July 2021 during which our Friends Groups traditionally help us to deliver some park events. This year the events were primarily online and presented a good opportunity to introduce residents to the new strategy.
- 2.5 The strategy is designed to consider management of the Council's own parks and open spaces. The management of new open spaces through new developments across the district is dealt with as part of planning policy.

### **Overview of the new strategy**

Parks are crucial places for residents and visitors to relax, play and keep fit, supporting our health and wellbeing, no better emphasised than through the pandemic experience. We offer

to ensure they remain fit for purpose; have good access, are clean and welcoming and that we continue positive engagement with users.

The strategy has been kept purposefully brief focussing on key outcomes. It is presented as an online document introduced by a video that showcases our wide variety of parks.

We will improve communication of our service through improved Frequently Asked Questions that work toward our customer self-serve initiatives. Our Operating Policies and Guidance set the basis to these answer (See Appendix 2).

The strategy explores sustainability providing opportunity for the council to improve biodiversity; tree planting where there is still space to do so, good woodland and riverine management, creating new habitats with long grass areas and meadows. We emphasise that the Council has invested in a wide range of improvements over the years and remains committed to our parks.

The strategy explores how to supplement our core funding by continuing to secure grant funding, looking at alternative delivery models and by commercialising more; hiring spaces out and developing funding streams such as tendering contracts for food vending pitches.

The strategy is summarised by an acronym; ACE which sets out three core aims:

## **1 Attractive and Accessible**

Promoting equality and access for all. We will:

- provide access to more information about our parks and open spaces

- ensure our parks and open spaces are clean and welcoming with appropriate infrastructure to rest and move around them safely
- review our litter and dog waste provisions
- ensure we protect our natural assets- biodiversity and sustainability

## **2 Commercial**

Finding ways to keep our parks financially sustainable, we will:

- work with local providers to secure income through hiring out our open spaces for vending, physical activity and events
- maximise the use of our open spaces to commercial providers to generate income
- source external funding to enhance our parks and open spaces
- manage the grounds maintenance contract efficiently and grow its capacity to deliver improvements
- seek further opportunities to engage the community in crowd funding for specific site improvement projects

## **3 Environmental and Engaged**

Looking to our residents, we will:

- act upon recommendations from an independent audit of our parks that finds opportunities to improve habitats and increase biodiversity
- plant trees effectively informed by inspection data and the habitat audit
- identify locations within residential areas on Council owned land where tree planting can be increased



- develop a scheme to offer residents the opportunity to fund the planting of a tree in predetermined locations informed by the two previous initiatives
- develop verge/pollinator/wildflower initiatives
- provide electric hook up points that ice cream vans can plug into in our parks, providing ice creams without noise and air pollution
- communicate with our customers effectively and promote positive messages
- continue to commit to events such as love parks week
- work with providers to promote activity in our parks and open space which support health and well being
- continue to support our Friends of Parks groups to
- help us improve and develop our parks
- provide opportunities for residents to socialise, keep fit and look after their health and wellbeing
- contribute actively to the maintenance of our parks
- engage with visitors positively on our behalf and help us to monitor
- find ways to support smaller groups of volunteers where there may not be sufficient activity to create a fully-fledged Friends Group
- welcome community groups and organisations to support our objectives
- Secure economic vibrancy in our parks by increasing footfall and engendering a sense of ownership

A full version of the document can be found in Appendix 1. This version has been updated following feedback received through the consultation.

### **3.0 Reason(s)**

- 3.1 The Council owns and manages over 120 open spaces including 45 significant parks. Updating the strategy provides an opportunity to share the Council's direction of travel in this

high profile area of service.

- 3.2 The parks and open spaces owned and managed by the Council contribute toward the delivery of corporate objectives as explored in the strategy.

#### **4.0 Options**

- 4.1 The Council could decide not to adopt a new strategy, however given the significant parks and open spaces infrastructure within the authority ownership it would be prudent to determine key priorities moving forward in line with the Council's overarching priorities.

#### **5.0 Risks**

- 5.1 This strategy does not commit the Council to any greater resource level than is currently available.

#### **6.0 Implications/Consultations**

- 6.1 The eight week consultation process finds that the strategy is largely accepted by consultees. We received 179 responses to the online questionnaire. 79% of these consultees agreed with the strategy vision that "our Parks and Open Spaces are highly valued by residents and used more and more to promote health and wellbeing and our sustainability ambitions."

95% either agreed or strongly agreed with our core aim 1,  
Attractive and Accessible

63% either agreed or strongly agreed with our core aim 2,  
Commercial

86% either agreed or strongly agreed with our core aim 3,  
Engaged

The consultation asked what is important to our customers. Starting with a suggested list found the three most important things that people believe parks should offer:

Habitats for wildlife	61%
Places to walk	45%
Opportunities for play	43%
Accessible to all	36%
Somewhere to relax	30%
Woodlands	23%
Places to take dogs	22%
Rivers / lakes / ponds	21%
Meadowland	19%
Places to sit	18%
Opportunities to keep fit	16%
Somewhere to socialise	14%
Opportunities to volunteer	7%

A small number of other things were suggested by consultees under this section including cycling, events, affordable parking, toilets and safety.

The consultation asked “what is the one most crucial thing we should focus on to meet our customers’ needs in our parks and open spaces”. From a suggested list the three most chosen things were Biodiversity (25%), Cleanliness (21%) and Safety (16%). Less chosen options were Attractiveness (9%), Health and Wellbeing (6%) and Accessibility (6%). Other choices ranging from 5% to 1% were Quality, Welcoming, Financial Sustainability, Information and Public Engagement. 65% of consultees agreed that all the key aspects of parks and open space development are covered in the strategy.

The questionnaire invited additional written feedback (from 94 consultees containing 154 separate comments) containing some concerns which are summarised here:

- There is too much emphasis on commercialism. 5% of the comments expressed that there should be no commercialisation and another 4% asked that we retain some balance by ensuring this does not impact upon the peacefulness of some parks or make them less accessible. Whilst this is an understandable concern, the strategy does not propose any initiatives that would harm the character or function of our parks. Whilst some may prefer our parks to be funded without the need to generate some income, the Council must manage expectations by emphasising the financial constraints. The updated strategy attempts to soften some of the focus of commercialism following feedback.
- 3% of the comments expressed there should be no food vending, 1 comment expressed there should be more, 1 cautioned about affordability for some residents; potentially making it harder to bring children to a park where food vending is present. There was a request that ice cream vans are only accepted where they have adapted from diesel to electric generators.
- The document will be revised to emphasise that initiatives will consider these concerns and that the food vending tender will have a target period within which successful vendors should adapt to this requirement. The Council will install power points on sites where this is feasible.
- Physical access was noted as a priority as we develop our open spaces. The feedback mentioned better access for cyclists as well as specific points including disabled visitors and interventions to improve wet weather access.

Attention to footpath maintenance was also raised. These will be picked up in our individual greenspace action plans as these are continually revised.

- 3% emphasised that toilets should be provided in larger parks. The Council determined through its Community Toilet Scheme that toilets would not be provided directly by the Council. Two of our major parks provide access to toilets in our leisure centres, Hartham and Grange Paddocks. The former is located in the pavilion directly adjacent to the busiest area of the park; the young children's play space.
- 11% of the comments expressed that the strategy should make more commitment to biodiversity and improving the environmental sustainability of our open spaces such as more planting including memorial trees and opportunities to develop effective verge/pollinator/wildflower initiatives. One group response felt that the Council should be "actively working toward" such objectives and not "exploring a way to deliver" them.
- The document has been revised to express greater commitment to this area fitting more with the Council's strategic aim to keep: "sustainability at the heart of everything we do". The core aims; ACE have been updated to include Engaged whilst considering the Environment. The Council is already working with the County Council to identify highway verges that can be cut less frequently under the agency agreement and we have commissioned the Countryside Management Service to conduct an audit of our open spaces to identify further areas of potential improvement such as planting trees, creating meadows and reviewing the management of grass and hedges. Our tree risk inspection consultant has

been asked to include an assessment of opportunities to replace trees that have been lost where we have not already done so.

- A wide range of other singular comments were received ranging from support for wellbeing initiatives, hiring out e-bikes and scooters, more parking, more focus on provisions for girls and more emphasis on woodland and hedge habitats. We will consider these other comments as we continue to develop our individual greenspace action plans.
- Another group consultee provided detailed comments outlining a request for more definition between previous successful projects and ideas for new initiatives and greater detail of how these are to be achieved. The document will be modified to offer further clarity between past and present. This concise and aspirational strategy offers some commitment to further improvements but it is not designed to be a detailed action plan. Our ongoing greenspace action plans provide the detail of our intended improvements and will continue to be guided by this strategy.

### **Community Safety**

- 2% of comments asked the Council to commit more resource to anti-social behaviour in our open spaces.

We support the police through our Community Wellbeing and Partnerships team as they deal with anti-social behaviour. The Council is committed to protecting our open spaces and we will emphasise this in our revised document. We will consider how we might find further resource within the wider public facing activities that the Council offer to encourage greater engagement on our smaller spaces. Increased littering as a form of anti-social behaviour

was raised as an issue. Our contractor has been adjusting their working methods to optimise their effectiveness and our litter bins are already under review as part of the Council's savings commitments this year.

### **Data Protection**

No

### **Equalities**

Yes – an equalities impact assessment was undertaken. No issues have been raised through the consultation process.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

Yes – forms a large aspect of the strategy

### **Financial**

Yes – commercial approach considered as part of the strategy

### **Health and Safety**

No

### **Human Resources**

No

### **Human Rights**

No

### **Legal**

No

### **Specific Wards**

No

## **7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

**Appendix 1** – Parks and Open Spaces Strategy – 2022-27, Final Draft

**Appendix 2** – Operating Policies and Guidance

**Appendix 3** – Equalities Impact Assessment

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## **Parks and Open Spaces Strategy – 2022 – 2027**

### **Executive Foreword**

Parks provide a vital opportunity for our residents to enjoy the outdoors. Green spaces are central to the council's vision of offering health and wellbeing to all. They provide a calm environment for all generations to relax and exercise. Sustainable habitats provide an abundance of wildlife. The Council works closely with some energetic and dedicated volunteers in Friends Groups across the district and we are proud of the great contribution they make. Over many years we have committed to our vision to develop our parks to a high standard and have made some considerable achievements; great opportunities for sport and leisure at Hartham Common, majestic and historic landscapes at Pishiobury Park and natural environments at Southern Country Park. We have some first class play areas which are regularly reviewed and updated. We will continue to keep parks in the forefront of our minds, reflecting on their considerable contribution to helping us through some difficult times during the Covid epidemic and through our response to managing the impacts of climate change.

This strategy will operate closely alongside the Council's wider plans outlined in our corporate objectives and specifically supporting our Environmental Sustainability, Cultural Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategies.

There are still some major projects to complete such as the improvements to Castle Park in Bishop's Stortford supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The next five years will be committed to ensuring our parks remain fit for purpose to accommodate a higher volume of use as our District grows. We are aware of the problems that need tackling such as the increase in littering, these will be managed with a resilience to find effective and positive solutions.

The Council, like many authorities across the country, no longer receives its Revenue Support Grant from central government and therefore needs to manage its resources effectively. Our aim is to deliver cost effective services and explore inventive solutions which ensure our parks can continue to meet the needs of our communities whilst generating sustainable income.

Our Parks will be **ACE; Attractive and Accessible** to all, managed with a **Commercial** influence and **Engaged** with their users whilst considering the **Environment** and will continue to contribute to the wellbeing of our residents.

*Cllr Eric Buckmaster*

*Executive Member for Wellbeing*

## Introduction

Our parks provide a wide range of leisure opportunities and habitats from small local play areas to wide open spaces for walking and playing sports. The following video provides a very brief insight into their diversity demonstrating why we are proud of the progress made to provide such attractive places to visit.



**Figure 1 Strategy Introduction video**

East Hertfordshire District Council (EHDC) has a strong history of providing high quality and well maintained parks and open spaces. Our corporate objectives over many years have recognised our green spaces as key assets able to deliver a wide range of benefits.

Our parks often form the heart of our communities. They have not stood still, we have invested and grown them to ensure they remain relevant and able to meet the wide needs of which they are capable.

Parks and Open Spaces provide us with places to enjoy the open air, to keep fit and to play. They offer a brief escape from the hustle and bustle of normal life. There are many studies<sup>1</sup> that explore their benefits, demonstrating how important they are to our wellbeing from physical exercise, relaxation, play and socialising and connecting with nature.

We understand what parks can offer the community and in preparing this strategy, outline how our parks have been brought to life and maintained at a standard of which we are proud. We also look forward by setting out our key objectives and focus over the next five years to ensure our green spaces continue to thrive.

## Our Vision

***"Our Parks and Open Spaces are highly valued by residents and used more and more to promote health and wellbeing and our sustainability ambitions."***



**Figure 2 Southern Country Park main pond area**

## Reviewing our Achievements

We must take stock of our achievements to guide new directions and inform decision making.. New play areas, access enhancements and conservation initiatives have invariably been made possible through grant funding contributions, effective tendering and in-house project management.

The Council has delivered a wide range of development projects over the last eight years. These include simple refurbishment of small play areas, protecting woodlands, creating meadowland, improving access and transforming spaces.

Explored below are some key improvements in the context of our Green Space management plans recognising that facilities installed 20 years ago must be re-assessed periodically to be sure that they still meet needs. We have carried out audits that assess play value, check physical condition and monitor whether there are now better ways to deliver interesting and vibrant parks and play areas.

Our Green Space Action Plans<sup>2</sup> have used fundamental criteria laid out by the Green Flag Award<sup>3</sup> initiative to raise the standard of parks across the country We have used these for the last 20 years as a structure to guide our projects and maintenance regimes.

Projects are prioritised from the findings of audits to ensure open spaces with a lower profile are not left behind. Whilst balancing the right investment opportunities from a diverse range of contributions and the timing of projects we have created a wide network of parks and open spaces for our community.

This snapshot of development projects provides examples of work carried out under six of the key Green Flag criteria, drawing out successes that inform the direction of this new strategy.

### 1. A welcoming Place

*Creating a space which, through its visual appearance, range of facilities, standards of maintenance and ease of access, makes people feel that they are in a cared-for place.*

We have developed a new play space to welcome visitors to Hartham Common in Hertford as part of a high profile replacement project. This had been anticipated for a number of years but could not be justified until other play sites had been brought up to an acceptable standard. It was prudent to wait for an opportunity to deliver something special. Planning contributions from local developments bolstered the Council's own capital investment alongside support from the local community to crowd fund enough for a "gold standard" design.



**Figure 3 Hartham Common - prior to new play area**



**Figure 4 Hartham Common new play area**

Increased awareness of the project through working with local users in this way provided further opportunities to engage with local businesses and the media. A shared ambition with residents helped to create a design that met everybody's needs and to deal proactively with challenges along the way.

The resulting space offers an incredible range of play experiences promoting inclusivity and exceptional landscape design. It transforms what was previously a tired park entrance into an inspiring and welcoming gateway. These images from before and after show the wide range of play value that has been achieved and the space now welcomes visitors with open arms.

## 2. Healthy, Safe and Secure

*Understanding users' needs, encouraging them to enjoy healthy activities using appropriate, safe-to-use facilities and activities, and to feel personally safe and secure.*

Good access has been a key consideration in the development of many of our parks:

- Bishop's Park - new car parking and safer routes to walk
- Pishiobury Park – disabled access parking, woodland walk and boardwalk
- Southern Country Park – hard surface paths and boardwalk across lake

Trinity Close is a much smaller park in Bishop's Stortford which had a reasonably good range of play equipment but was ready for a makeover. The site had some access issues that were not going to be easy to resolve. It had previously experienced some problems with antisocial behaviour which to some extent had been resolved by clearing vegetation to increase natural surveillance from surrounding properties. When funds became available through planning contributions from an adjacent development, we were able to make best use of some additional capital investment to launch a visionary project.



Figure 5 Trinity Close new play area

This involved substantial changes to the topography of the site and considerable upheaval for the very supportive local community. The resultant play space, now with an area in which the local community will be able to hold events, and with access not seen before, has been warmly received.

The Council is committed to the health and wellbeing of its residents.

- Fitness zones at Bishop's Park
- Marked running tracks
- Active Friends Groups
  - having significant positive influence on anti-social behaviour, communication, wildlife... our eyes and ears in the park
  - community cohesion with local people working with the Council to develop parks.
  - a working presence in our parks, sharing our plans with visitors and letting us know what is important to our customer from first hand interaction on site
  - opportunities to work in teams, develop friendships and keep healthy
  - organising events for the wider community

### **3. Well Maintained and Clean**

*For aesthetic as well as health and safety reasons, issues of cleanliness and maintenance are addressed*

We have developed systems of well-considered and connected maintenance. Experience learnt from delivering good quality maintenance through successive grounds maintenance contracts and investment in procurement specialists resulted in the successful re-tendering of the main contract in 2020 which now incorporates:

- Delivering a full tree maintenance service
- Working closely with our tree risk inspection management provider
- An holistic open space and play inspection and maintenance regime
- Flexible litter picking and collection services

### **4. Environmental Management**

*Ensuring the way the site is managed has a positive impact on the environment, locally and globally, both now and for the future.*

Green spaces can really come alive when they have the benefit of two key ingredients; interested residents and healthy habitats.

Southern Country Park in Bishop's Stortford is a prime example of this:

Handed to Council by developers as a well maintained and tidy park but somewhat bland and sterile. We worked with local people to develop a greenspace action plan in partnership with CMS which resulted in the formation of the enthusiastic and active Friends of Southern Country Park. That management plan explored what could be done to improve the park and how residents felt about this. It created an agreed action plan of the higher priority works for a five year period. The Friends group were empowered to work with us to seek further investment and to carry out long term tasks alongside Council developed projects that progressively transformed the environment and won a Green Flag Award. These tasks included:

- Defra funded lake marginal planting
- Environment Agency funded fishing platforms
- Boardwalk across pond gabions to improve access and safety funded through planning contributions
- woodland thinning
- tree planting
- hedge laying
- pond restoration
- managing fish stock





Transformed habitats across the park created a more diverse and abundant wildlife, this in turn encourages even more reason to protect and improve

## 5. Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage

*Attention to the appropriate management and conservation of natural features, wildlife and flora; landscape features; and buildings and structures.*

Pishiobury Park in Sawbridgeworth had a similar trajectory:

Early intervention by the Council to invest in a Historical Landscape Character Assessment of the park, informed the first greenspace action plan.

Support from local people consulted through developing the plan resulted in the dedicated and committed Friends of Pishiobury Park working with us to achieve some important improvements:

- reforming woodland to achieve visible enclosure of the landscape
- Restoration of the English landscape (created in the 18<sup>th</sup> century)
- Creation of ponds
- Return of grazing, supporting rare breed livestock and a diverse grassland habitat
- Archaeological exploration of the park's history
- annual events
- repurposing of the Osier beds
- boardwalks to discover hidden areas and to cross wet areas in the winter

Local Nature Reserve status and a protected historical landscape emphasised the need to conserve and develop the park's biodiversity and fascinating history.



**Figure 7 Pishiobury Park cattle at Love Parks Week event**

We have made a lot of improvements to our open spaces by increasing meadowland areas, protecting reed beds, altering our grass cutting regimes to leave longer grass areas, creating wildlife areas, improving our management of woodlands, increasing wetland areas and improving the management of chalk banks.

## **6. Community Involvement**

*Understanding the community; a park seeks to serve and actively involve people in making decisions about the site's development; providing opportunities for active participation in site projects; and ensuring that there is appropriate provision of recreational facilities and activities for all sectors of the community.*

All our Friends groups are examples of how we work directly with residents to develop our parks. The Friends of Castle Park in Bishop's Stortford is one of our newer groups who have already been involved in a wide range of activities:

- created as part of the development of the National Lottery Heritage Funded project to transform the park they have
  - provided hands on support to develop events and inform the direction of the project
  - organised annual events
  - carried out youth engagement
  - supported archaeology projects
  - improved wildlife habitats through Groundworks partnership
  - planted trees
  - run health walks / HSBC Breeze Rides
  - supported Parkrun

Each year the Council celebrates Love Parks Week at the end of July with events in two of our major parks, Pishiobury Park and Southern Country Park. This wouldn't be possible without the dedicated support of our Friends groups. The events invite our residents to come and have fun and have grown each year, promoting our parks and providing us with an opportunity to reflect on how important the connection between the community and our parks really is.

We believe these 6 fundamental criteria underpin how our parks and open spaces should be managed. However, given the changing climate and priorities we need to bolster our commitments when looking to the future. The

following sections of this strategy will illustrate the change in policies that we need to adapt to and build upon these foundations.

## Strategic Context

- **The Corporate Plan**

The Council's overarching corporate aims<sup>4</sup> are captured in four priorities:

- Sustainability at the heart of everything we do
- Enabling our communities
- Encouraging economic growth
- Digital by default

The Council and partners have developed various plans and strategies which help to steer delivery of these corporate objectives and should be considered in the context of developing our parks:

- **East Herts Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan**

This strategy is being developed from the current working project Action Plan (below). It will be a succinct tool to guide the authority and will contain environmental target KPIs, (net gains for example) some of which are likely to be delivered through parks and open spaces over the next 5 years.

- **Hertfordshire Climate and Sustainability Partnership's (HCCSP) Biodiversity Action Plan**

The HCCSP represents the ten district and borough councils of Hertfordshire, the County Council, and the Local Enterprise Partnership. It formed in 2020 and identified four priority areas upon which to focus its collaborative efforts : Water, Biodiversity, Transport, and Carbon Emissions. Four subgroups were tasked each with the development of a Strategic Action Plan. The Biodiversity Subgroup has been preparing a working draft with an overarching aim to halt and reverse biodiversity declines across the county. This includes an audit of open spaces across the district which will have a bearing on parks and open spaces providing opportunities to work in partnership over some shared objectives.

- **Planning strategy (SPD) and Local Plan**

Opportunities through planning contributions (section 106 agreements) will continue to be important and future changes to these landing within the timeframe of this strategy may require some inbuilt flexibility.

- **East Herts Cultural Strategy 2021-2025**

The Council is currently consulting on this strategy. The vision it offers has considerable synergy with the aims set out to manage our parks: *East Herts will lead the way in demonstrating that when residents, community organisations and the creative industries come together extraordinary, surprising and delightful things can happen that enrich and enhance everyone's health, wellbeing and sense of inclusion.*

It emphasises that partners can contribute to this in a number of roles; enabler, innovator, partner and provider. Our parks have rich opportunities for cultural activities and bringing people together with aspirations to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

- **East Herts Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2023**

This strategy focusses on areas that can be assisted greatly through the delivery of parks for people. Wellbeing is closely connected to our health and is associated with a sense of purpose and contentment; it often relates to our values and beliefs. The Council is committed to helping individuals, families and communities look after their health and wellbeing.

Parks can offer access to events and activities for different ages; buggy fitness, local woods activities, cycle rides, community games, Get Park Active Events, scooting and walking.

- **East Herts Physical Activity Strategy**

The Council is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of its community and enhancing the quality of people's lives. We recognise that sport and physical activity is key to achieving this. We want every member of our community to have the opportunity to participate in physical activity in the way they choose. This might include walking in open spaces, cycling to work, playing sport with friends or going to a gym.

From a national perspective this documents also has some relevance:

- **England Tree Strategy**

This has now gone through consultation and the final Strategy is expected to be published in Spring 22. The Council aims to develop a separate Tree Strategy that will reflect on this, explore the services we provide and plan how will continue to care responsibly for a trees and woodlands.

## Looking to the Future

Our ongoing ambition will be for our parks and open spaces to be **ACE; Attractive and Accessible, Commercial and Environmental and Engaged**, inspiring others to partner with us to make them even better places to live and work in.

With these core aims, we will focus on our parks being:

### Attractive and Accessible to all

Promoting equality and access for all whether its walking in our open spaces, accessible equipment in play areas or learning more about historic monuments in our parks and open spaces. We will:

- provide access to more information about our parks and open spaces online and promote the “park herts” web tool
- ensure our parks and open spaces are clean and welcoming with appropriate infrastructure to rest and move around them safely
- review our litter and dog waste provisions and look at ways to maximise the service efficiently whilst aiming to tackle the problems of littering
- ensure we protect our natural assets- biodiversity and sustainability

### Commercial

Finding ways to keep our parks financially sustainable, we will:

- work with local providers to secure income through hiring out our open spaces for vending, physical activity and events
- maximise the use of our open spaces to commercial providers to generate income
- source external funding to enhance our parks and open spaces
- manage the grounds maintenance contract efficiently and grow its capacity to deliver improvements
- seek further opportunities to engage the community in crowd funding to support specific site improvement projects
- explore alternative delivery models working with the local community

### Environmental and Engaged

Looking to our residents, we will:

- act upon recommendations from an independent audit of our parks that finds opportunities to improve habitats and increase biodiversity

- plant trees effectively informed by inspection data and the habitat audit
- identify locations within residential areas on Council owned land where tree planting can be increased
- develop a scheme to offer residents the opportunity to fund the planting of a native tree in predetermined locations informed by the two previous initiatives
- develop verge/pollinator/wildflower initiatives
- provide electric hook up points that ice cream vans can plug into in our parks, providing ice creams without noise and air pollution
- communicate with our customers effectively and promote positive messages
- continue to commit to events such as love parks week
- work with providers to promote activity in our parks and open space which support health and well being
- continue to support our Friends of Parks groups to
  - help us improve and develop our parks
  - provide opportunities for residents to socialise, keep fit and look after their health and wellbeing
  - contribute actively to the maintenance of our parks
  - engage with visitors positively on our behalf and help us to monitor our parks
- find ways to support smaller groups of volunteers where there may not be sufficient activity to create a fully-fledged Friends Group
- welcome community groups and organisations to support our objectives
- Secure economic vibrancy in our parks by increasing footfall and engendering a sense of ownership

Working closely with our residents will be important as we move forward. Local people have demonstrated to us through their interest in our parks and through the increased usage that they value these special places. Our message through this Strategy is that we need to nurture that support further by enabling people to get more involved, with a common aim to make them special places to visit.

The experience of managing parks through the Covid pandemic has brought many challenges but it has also introduced some of our open spaces to residents who had previously not been minded to visit them.

The unprecedented level of use may begin to decline as people return to other forms of leisure and take exercise in other ways but we anticipate that many new visitors will continue to return.

Managing this increased level of use has helped us to review what elements of our parks are most important to our visitors and how we can ensure that they continue to meet our needs.

### **Core Aims – some more detail**

- **Accessibility**

We have learnt that our residents have recognised the significant opportunity that our parks offer for leisure and for our wellbeing, we must ensure that the infrastructure is reviewed and adjusted to cope with the increased future use.

Moving forward, we need to manage and control access at peak times. This may require the widening of pinch points and improved grass reinforcement to support car access to suitable areas for temporary parking. Our clients offering boot camps and events will benefit from this. During busy periods these routes might facilitate different entrance and exit points to manage congestion and will need well designed infrastructure to safely combine cycle and pedestrian access alongside vehicles where necessary.

Some parks with strong heritage or biodiversity value such as Pishiobury Park for example will be unsuitable for expanding hard surface networks. Whilst visitors should be encouraged to wear appropriate footwear, there may still be opportunities for resolving pinch points to facilitate social distancing. The ongoing Lottery funded project at this park includes work to improve the signage at the park's extremities. Ensuring visitors can find our parks is something that we can do more of.

The Council is also supporting the new web based tool for residents to find and navigate parks in the County; ParkHerts<sup>5</sup>.

- **Communicating with our customers**

We consistently offer useful advice about our parks and open spaces through our consultation events and deal promptly with customer enquiries. However, we could make it easier for customers to find out how we manage our services and what we can and can't do to help.

To make it much easier for customers to find answers without needing to ask and wait for a response, we will develop the Council's web based service to answer "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQs). This will include answers to questions relating to overhanging trees, memorial benches and the scattering of ashes along with some detailed explanations of how we manage shrub pruning adjacent to people's properties and whether we allow drones in our parks.

We will also use this opportunity to bring together some policies and working procedures into one easily accessible format. The council has expressed an informal position for example on wild animals in circuses, memorabilia in parks and the use of helium balloons and sky lanterns. These will be formalised as part of the Council's adoption of this document. The FAQs are developed using the Operating Policies and Guidance listed in Appendix 1 and will be made available as a searchable tool on completion of the final approved version of the strategy.

We will work with our contractor to offer a web based facility for customers to find out about grass cutting in their local area. This area of service has always been of considerable interest to residents. The system will offer a postcode search of the grass cutting programme to inform residents when to expect the next visit.

As we improve our parks further, creating new features, updating existing ones and exploring how we manage them we will continue to develop our ideas and commitments through Greenspace Action Plans offering residents the opportunity to get involved.

Parks need to be used and cherished by local people. Community awareness of our open spaces and what they offer can result in a healthy partnership between the Council who manage these assets and the residents who enjoy them.

This is demonstrated strongly in our Friends of Parks groups where residents are able to influence how our parks develop, take an active role in their maintenance and help the Council to forge stronger relationships with the wider community. Where anti-social behaviour has once been a feature in some of our parks, this has improved with the positive presence of these groups. The Council will continue to provide resources to support volunteers who get



involved through these groups and who also play an important role through other activities such as litter picking.

We aim to welcome visitors to our parks without unnecessary restriction by encouraging responsible behaviour.

Our observations are that park users are more likely to comply with sensible guidelines that they understand and can relate to. Where there is a specific issue we may target campaigns to that area but try to avoid generalised actions where there is no evidence of a problem. A sensible approach to dog fouling should foster peer pressure from dog owners for compliance.

An example of this is the way we aim to deal with issues relating to dogs. We work with dog trainers to help educate visitors and have installed dog training areas without banning dogs or installing prohibitive signs

Encouraging parents and young people to use play areas responsibly is another example of sensible communication, creating safe yet challenging play but without the need for restrictive regulations. "Keep off the grass" signs are not going to help us engage in a positive way with our customers.

- **Attractiveness**

There has been an unprecedented increase in the number of residents from East Herts and beyond visiting our parks during the pandemic (2020-2021). This is likely due to the constraint on residents from enjoying any other form of exercise or leisure activity. It is very encouraging that we are able to welcome so many new visitors to our parks but this has created some issues.

The amount of litter being dispensed into litter bins and being dropped across our sites has increased dramatically.

We encourage people to take litter home and with the support of organisations such as the Keep Tidy Britain Group who understand how to 'nudge' better societal behaviours. Other organisations such as The National Trust for instance do not provide litter bins on all their sites, preferring visitors to "take your litter home and leave no trace of your visit". We will continue to explore campaigns that go to the heart of the littering problem for those that choose to litter.

Our grounds maintenance contractor has diverted considerable resources into additional litter picking and increased the number of visits to empty litter bins. Many of our bins are emptied on a frequency basis and we have increased this

frequency where possible. Some litter picking is carried out on a performance basis to ensure that high profile parks are litter picked as often as necessary to meet the given standard. There is however, a limit to the level of resources available to respond to pressures such as these where the whole service across all parks has been affected.

Going forward, we will be auditing our litter and dog bin service to ensure that it is fit for purpose, offers value for money and can adapt to any future ongoing increases in need. This may result in larger bins or a different style of bins.

We will review all the agreements we have with towns and parishes to empty bins on their open spaces, ensuring that there is consistency in relation to their location, purpose and funding. There may also be some bins on privately owned ground or on the highway that should perhaps not be managed by East Herts Council at all.

We will ensure that our cross cutting services coordinate litter picking and bin emptying services and engage positively and supportively with residents or community groups wishing to litter pick as volunteers.

We are committed to delivering attractive enhancements that signpost our facilities and offer a welcome to visitors with colourful planting. This includes our annual bedding schemes and containers, wild flower displays at high profile locations, herbaceous beds and an ongoing review of our shrub borders. These all combine to offer a mix of summer and winter colour.

- **Commercial**

We will continue looking after our parks to a high standard but need to recognise that the natural deterioration of assets requires a process of replacement and renewal. This can be delivered through a broad mixture of in-house and external opportunities.

The Council aims to continue allocating resources to keep the district attractive, clean and tidy and to protect investments already made to improve our parks. We will continue to seek sustainable funding from granting bodies such as the Environment Agency, Heritage Lottery Fund and other partner agencies. We will ensure businesses that benefit from the investment in delivering high quality parks are engaged to contribute toward their upkeep through initiatives such as vending outlets and events.

The Council welcomes local community groups and charities to book our parks and open spaces. We ask for evidence of a well-run and safe event before authorising any activity. Companies or charities proposing larger events that require input from officers and have an impact on an open space are required to pay a contribution to the significant costs of developing and maintaining our parks to a standard that offers such a useful and attractive resource.

Contributions from developers through the planning system (section 106 agreements) should continue to be directed toward the Council's portfolio of assets such as our open spaces to ensure their quality is maintained..

We believe there are a number of commercial opportunities we can explore for our parks and open spaces to ensure we are able to maintain standards of operation. The strategy will provide us the impetus to focus efforts in this area.

- **Engaged and Environmental**

The Council values the support it receives from the community both through volunteer work and through active engagement with our processes of consultation to develop our services.

We will continue to work with providers to promote activity in our parks and open spaces which support health and wellbeing and to commit to events such as "Love Parks" week in Southern Country Park, Castle Park and Pishiobury Park.

We support the parish and town councils by sharing our experience in managing play areas and particularly through an opportunity to benefit from our county wide procurement of annual play inspections.

The Council has made substantial improvements to the biodiversity of our parks through a range of initiatives including the creation of wild flower meadows, ponds, good woodland management and tree planting. These have largely been as a result of our commitment to responsible maintenance. It is now time, to approach this ambition in a more focussed and measurable way.

We will be working with other authorities through ParksHerts to consider what scope there may be for collaboration between authorities over verge/pollinator/wildflower initiatives. The Countryside Management Service are working on our behalf to identify opportunities for improving biodiversity across specific district portfolios. They will be carrying out an audit of our open spaces

to pinpoint actual improvements that could be made; finding open spaces, or parts of open spaces that might for instance have grassland or woodland that could be improved. This data will be sense checked regarding any practical issues or future plans; for instance where grassland has been identified for other requirements such as additional football pitches.

This supports wider initiatives being delivered by the County Council through Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) sub group for Bio-diversity bringing a level of consistency to work across the County and exploring a base line for improvements.

The Council plants trees as part of an ongoing annual programme and is conscious of campaigns to increase tree cover by specific amounts.

East Herts as a district currently has approximately 10% tree canopy cover (4,728 ha) although this does not include small wooded areas and sites less than 0.5 ha. The Council is proud of the work it has already undertaken in terms of tree planting and management of our open spaces. Indeed over the last few years, through our Greenspace Action Plans, we have already undertaken considerable planting programmes in our open spaces, whilst at the same time attempting to maintain a balance to allow the continued multi-purpose use of these areas. We have more than 70,000 trees in our tree stock. These trees are located in a variety of settings such as woodland copses, hedgerow trees, enclosures around major parks such as Pishiobury Park, a community woodland at Hartham Common, an extension to the woodland at Balls Wood and considerable planting schemes at Southern Country Park.

However, as the Council owns comparatively little land it is not possible for us to commit to planting significant new wooded areas ourselves unless some of that land currently used for other leisure purposes is given over to tree planting, this would be detrimental to our fundamental offer of recreational and sports facilities. Any purchase of new land is beyond the remit of this strategy.

The Council firmly recognises the need to work with other partners to encourage them to plant more trees not only for the purpose of carbon capture but also air quality and the general social benefits trees so clearly provide. We therefore expect to work with relevant partners where possible to consider options for planting additional trees on suitable land that they may manage.

We will continue to plant trees informed by the open space audit and by our risk management tree inspection programme which tracks potential opportunities to replace trees that have been lost for safety reasons. Whilst many of our larger open spaces have less capacity now for additional trees after several years of tree planting, we will begin to assess and plant in smaller Council owned spaces in residential areas where there is sufficient space.

We aim to set up a map supported web page for residents to express their interest in funding some of these new trees to help increase this valuable contribution to sustainability and climate control. This may be to remember a loved one or simply to demonstrate commitment. Volunteer planting will still be undertaken by our Friends Groups



Figure 8 Buryfield Local Park

**Key Actions**

The strategy is supported by an annual action plan that will be revised in line with the Council's corporate plan refresh.

Ref	Action	When	Who	Resource
<b>Accessible and Attractive</b>				
1	Create and maintain a comprehensive library of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)	2021	EHC	Operations
2	Work with our contractor; to offer a web based facility for customers to find out about grass cutting in their local area	2022	EHC	Glendale
3	Promote the "park herts" web tool	2022	EHC	Comms
4	Work with providers to promote activity in our parks and open space which support health and well being	2022-27	EHC	Operations / Providers
5	Complete litter and dog waste bin review	2022	EHC	Operations
6	Coordinate litter functions across services	2023	EHC	Operations / Waste
7	Take the lessons learnt through developing our major and larger parks to smaller open spaces, ensuring that the Green Flag concept of a good park is used to continue developing a network of accessible and attractive green spaces across the district	2022-27	EHC	Operations
<b>Commercial</b>				
8	Work with local providers to secure income through hiring out our open spaces for vending, physical activity and events	2022	EHC/ Provider s	Operations / Providers
9	Explore alternative delivery models	2022	EHC	Operations

Ref	Action	When	Who	Resource
10	Review all third party users and identify potential users to ensure that access improvements meet needs and to secure appropriate financial contributions toward maintaining parks as an asset	2023	EHC	Operations / External
<b>Environmental and Engaged</b>				
11	Continue to provide support to our Friends of Parks groups through our partnership arrangements with the Countryside Management Service	2022-27	EHC / CMS	Revenue Budget
12	Actively work to find ways of delivering the maintenance of our parks and open spaces to improve biodiversity and sustainability	2023-27	EHC	Revenue Budget
13	Act upon recommendations from an independent audit of our parks that finds opportunities to improve habitats and increase biodiversity	2022-27	EHC / CMS	Operations / External
14	Plant trees informed by inspection data and the habitat audit	2022-27	EHC / CMS	Revenue Budget
15	Identify locations within residential areas on Council owned land where native tree planting can be increased and develop a scheme to offer residents the opportunity to help fund this	2023		Operations
16	Develop verge/pollinator/wildflower initiatives	2022-27	EHC / CMS/HC C	Operations / External
17	Provide electric hook up points that ice cream vans can plug into in our parks, providing ice creams without noise and air pollution	2022	EHC	Operations
18	Manage and develop the grounds maintenance contract efficiently	2022-27	EHC	Operations
19	Deliver Lottery funded improvements at Castle Park, Bishop's Stortford	2021-23	EHC	NLHF / Capital / CMS
20	Apply for National Lottery Heritage Fund grant to improve Hertford Castle Grounds	2021	EHC	Operations / CMS

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Some national studies relating to Parks and Open Spaces

<https://www.parksmanagement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Revaluating-Parks-and-Green-Spaces-Report.pdf>

[https://www.parksmanagement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/improving\\_access\\_to\\_greenpace\\_2020\\_review.pdf](https://www.parksmanagement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/improving_access_to_greenpace_2020_review.pdf)

<https://www.parksmanagement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/the-value-of-public-space1.pdf>

<https://www.parksmanagement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/recreating-parks.pdf>

<https://www.parksmanagement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/managing-public-parks-during-covid-19-final-1.pdf>

<https://www.parksmanagement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/making-parks-count-compressed-document.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Green Space Action Plans

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/sports-leisure-parks/how-we-look-after-our-parks-open-spaces>

<sup>3</sup>Green Flag Award

<https://www.greenflagaward.org/>

<sup>4</sup>Corporate priorities

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/about-east-herts-0/vision-and-corporate-priorities>

<sup>5</sup>ParkHerts web based tool

<https://www.parksherts.co.uk/>

<sup>6</sup>Planning for Dog Ownership in New Developments: Reducing Conflict – Adding Value

<https://documents.hants.gov.uk/ccbs/countryside/planningfordogownership.pdf>

## **Appendix 1** - Operating Policies and Guidance

See separate document



## Appendix 2

### Operations, Parks and Open Spaces Team



## Operating Policies and Guidance

These operating policies have been developed over a number of years to explain the Council's position on a range of activities. These policies underpin the work of the parks and open spaces strategy.

We will do our best to help residents resolve issues where we can but our position must always bear in mind the resources we have available and certain parameters within which we must operate.

### Index

Animals in Circuses

Ballgames in open spaces and play areas

Events

- Event application Process
- Use of a bouncy castle / gazebo / tent / barbecue in a Council park

Cattle in parks

Dogs in our Parks

- Dog Fouling
- Dog control – fencing

Drones and model aircraft

E-scooters in parks

Graffiti in parks

Helium Balloons and Sky Lanterns

Invasive plants

- Giant Hogweed on private land visible from highway
- Japanese Knotweed on East Herts Council land

Benches, plaques and memorial trees

- Donating a bench or plaque
- Request to plant a memorial tree
- Memorabilia in parks

Metal detecting and magnet fishing

Pests and Animal Behaviour including bees

- Bird Droppings
- Bees
- Pest Control

Play areas

- Sand play – dog and cat waste
- Play area noise and frequent use (Antisocial behaviour)

Risk assessments in parks

- Risk inspections across parks
- Rope swings in woodlands

Scattering of Ashes on East Herts Council Open Spaces

Shrubs / shrub beds / hedges

- Shrub bed / hedge encroachment to boundary
- Ivy growing over boundary from a Council open space
- Hedge or shrubs close to residential fence, concerns about encroachment and height
- High Hedge complaints

## Trees owned by the Council

- Tree safety and maintenance
- Tree fruit/seeds/leaves droppings onto resident's property.
- Planting trees
- Overhanging trees
- Woodland Trees
- Trees blocking light or CCTV
- Tree roots
- Fungus on trees
- Trees covered in Ivy
- Cracks/splits in trees

## Trees on the highway

- Street lights obscured by trees
- Bush or hedgerow encroaching on a public footpath from a private garden

## General Tree Health

- Unsafe trees
- Tree advice

## Animals in Circuses

Whilst we have few circuses hiring our land and have not been approached by any which use wild animals, the Council has considered concerns raised about this matter and are confident it is not a practice which our customers would support. We have therefore introduced a clause within our rules and regulations for hiring open spaces which prohibits it.

Our research shows that this is a simple and effective control mechanism employed by a number of other local authorities.

The Council imposes a ban on the use of wild animals in circuses performing on East Herts Council land described in our open space hire rules as follows:

It is a condition of the grant of the authorisation that the organiser:

- *Will not include the use of performing animals at the event, except those which are normally regarded as domesticated in the United Kingdom (i.e. horses, dogs, cats, birds used in falconry demonstrations, caged birds and rabbits) which may be used as an ancillary part of a performance.*

## **Ballgames in open spaces and play areas**

The Council manages more than 120 open spaces across the district including around 60 equipped play areas. Our play areas are located wherever possible at a reasonable distance from residential properties and in general we receive very few concerns about them. A small number of residents do have concerns about noise from children playing or kicking a ball about on an open space.

We installed play areas signs in 2011 to provide a welcome and to provide users with some sensible guidance. Those play areas which included a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) a goalball or basketball hoops or that are large enough to accommodate kick-about have a sign that permits ball games. All other play areas have a sign that includes "no ballgames". These signs on all our play areas include a note that "dogs are banned from this play area".

This reminds visitors that smaller play areas designed for younger children are not suitable for ballgames.

The Council does not and will not erect signs on any of our open green spaces to prohibit ball games. Our open spaces are there for all to enjoy including kicking a ball about. Our experience is that "no ball games" signs are not an effective solution to anti-social behaviour. There is no law to support this type of ban and such signs are therefore not enforceable.

We will always listen to concerns but our starting point is that young people have as much right to use our green spaces as any other resident.

If residents believe that a particular activity such a kicking a ball about is causing a nuisance they can contact customer services who will alert our Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Team. They will work with us to investigate concerns.

In some instances they may not agree that kicking a ball about does constitute antisocial behaviour but where it does they will help to find a solution. That may include talking to the young people or if behaviour is exceptionally challenging, may involve support from the police. In some circumstances where the area is very small and close to property boundaries it might also include modifying the landscape with trees or shrubs to divert activity if there is a more suitable space nearby.

## **Events**

Our parks and open spaces can be used for events however requests must go through the event application process before being approved.

- **Event application Process**

If residents or businesses are planning an event and would like to hire one of our open spaces, they are required to provide us with some initial information so that we can consider the application. We may ask for more details depending on how complex the ideas are so it's best to tell us as much as you can at the first stage. We won't necessarily need a complete event management plan, but will need to understand how the event might impact upon the open space and other users and to gauge whether you are likely to be able to run it safely. Residents and businesses are to contact customer services to log their interest, the council will send the applicant an initial application form from which we can decide whether to authorise the event and to set an appropriate fee. The Council will make a charge where appropriate to offset the costs of maintaining and developing our parks. Customers should allow sufficient time to organise the event and seek our approval.

The type of information that we will need to know about are the intended activities are where in the park the customer would like to locate, number of participants, level of resources, health and safety issues, parking, access, expertise, any equipment you intend to use and whether the applicant has Public Liability Insurance in place if it is needed.

If applicants are planning a large event they may also need to seek guidance from our Safety Advisory Group (SAG). Further information can be found here: <https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/community-wellbeing/community-events>

### **Bouncy castle / gazebo / tent / barbecue in a Council park**

We encourage residents to make the most of our parks and enjoy them in any way that does not adversely affect the park or have negative impact on other users.

Organised events must have our formal authority to proceed so that we can ensure risks have been properly considered and that the Council is able to make a charge where appropriate to offset costs of maintaining and developing our parks.

Families or groups of friends however, may gather in our parks as long as participants take sensible precautions to keep themselves and other park users safe. In some parks where space is limited, it is not appropriate for any group to spoil the enjoyment of the park for others.

We do not permit barbecues as they can present a risk to users and often result in hot coals being left that might present a fire risk. We would not allow the use of calor or butane gas in our parks unless as part of an authorised event.

Likewise, bouncy castles are not permitted unless erected and supervised by a professional supplier as part of an authorised event.

Camping is not permitted in our parks but we are happy for families to use gazebos for “one day” events. Gazebos cannot be left overnight. They should be located mindfully to avoid blocking access or enjoyment of the park for other users.

All litter and arisings from gatherings must be cleared. Litter can be left in bins but if they are full, as can happen on busy days, user must take home for disposal.

## **Cattle in parks**

We have grazed cattle in our parks for many years on and off. It is very important that visitors follow the country code and keep their dogs under control. The few incidents that have been reported to the council are where the animals have been frightened by dogs that have not been kept under control or on a lead in the park. This is of course the same across the country in areas where the public come into contact with cattle through parks or across public rights of way. If residents and visitors visit any of our parks where there are cattle with a dog we ask that this is taken into consideration.

We are aware that some residents are worried by the presence of cattle in some of our parks such as Pishiobury Park, Stortford Meadows and Hartham Common and would like to provide some reassurance.

We are aware that the cattle can be quite inquisitive, especially when they arrive at the beginning of the season (April/May). If residents are not comfortable with this, waving arms about will send the animals in the opposite direction but the more natural reaction to run away from them is not advised. The cattle are then likely, given their inquisitive nature, to follow.

Our graziers are in the park a number of times during the week and are always happy to talk to visitors about their animals.

The cattle are an important part of conservation grazing and ecological management of the park. We have been fortunate enough to have a herd of rare breed cattle in Pishiobury for over ten years and we can assure residents that there is no great risk to the public. The cattle are all aged under 30 months and are carefully selected, by the grazier, for their suitability to maintain this important permanent parkland pasture. Only steers (bullocks) are used for grazing at Pishiobury and are known for their docility and calm temperament. The animals seen at Pishiobury are all from pedigree, rare or traditional breeds.

The Longhorns come from our oldest recorded indigenous breed. The Herefords are from some of the oldest known bloodlines and British Whites have been seen on parkland pastures for centuries.

We understand that some visitors are not used to seeing large animals in parks and may be un-nerved but the benefits in terms of conservation and education are huge. We hope therefore to be able to continue to help people understand these benefits and to be able to enjoy the park alongside the cattle and of course all the wildlife that it supports.

We install signs to provide visitors with some guidance and information about the animals. For further information about why we graze our parks in this way and about the animals in general c b found on the Council website.

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/sports-leisure-parks/local-parks-open-spaces-0/parks-open-spaces-sawbridgeworth/pishiobury-park>

## Dogs in our Parks

- **Dog Fouling**

We aim to ensure our parks welcome visitors without unnecessary restriction by encouraging responsible behaviour. For example, we work with dog trainers to help educate visitors, have installed a dog training area in one of our parks and have introduced some legislation which we believe is fair and proportionate.

This legislation was considered through a consultation process and is contained within a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO). It does not ban dogs from any of our parks but does deal with a range of issues including dog fouling and control. It excludes dogs from certain areas including fenced tennis courts, bowling greens and marked football pitches when a game is in progress. It is an offence to allow a dog to foul in any East Herts owned open space.

There are 12.5 million dogs in the UK in 33% of households. The majority of dog owners behave responsibly and many share concerns about the few who do not. Our view is that residents generally prefer to comply with sensible guidelines that they understand and can relate to. This approach should help to retain the support of dog owners.

Further information on the PSPO with links to the specific rules relating to dogs can be found at:

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/community-wellbeing/public-spaces-protection-order-pspo>

We will along with the police take action on dog fouling if we witness anybody not picking up after their dogs. We regularly patrol our parks, if residents are concerned that a dog owner is not meeting the requirements to clear up after their dog in one of our listed parks and open spaces they can report this on our "Report Dog Fouling Form" at

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/environmental-health/dog-fouling-dog-control/report-dog-fouling-form>

If residents believe that an owner has allowed their dog to behave aggressively or dangerously then they may report this to the police on their non-emergency number 101 or 999 if the incident is serious and ongoing. East Herts Council is not empowered to deal with or enforce issues with dangerous dogs.

- **Dog control - fencing**

Whilst we try to make our parks great places for all residents to visit, the Council cannot prioritise expenditure on dog proof fencing. The Council has a finite budget available to maintain and develop its parks and open spaces. We believe that our parks are already good places to walk dogs but that secure fencing to contain dogs is not a justifiable expense.

The shrubs and vegetation around the boundaries of our parks need to be pruned back periodically in order to promote healthy growth and in some instances to afford access to our contractors to clear litter or fly tipped material. They are generally planted to attractively screen out buildings and to create an enclosed character but are not planted to provide security to residents or to create a barrier to prevent dogs from escaping.

We do understand that our parks are very popular with dog owners and we welcome such use. We are keen to promote responsible dog ownership and for dog owners to have sufficient control of their pets to be able to let them run without the need for secure fencing. It is important that dog owners are able to get their dogs to return when needed, not just for their own safety but for the benefit of other park users. Even in our parks where we have stock proof cattle fencing, there are still kissing gates through which dogs are able to escape. Stock proof fencing may not contain smaller dogs. It is far better that dog owners take responsibility for their animals than for the council to try and guarantee enclosure.

We understand that some dogs may chase rabbits or suddenly scatter if spooked but would advise that where there is a risk nearby such as a rail line, road, cattle or other potential hazard, they should then be kept on a lead. The



Council cannot commit to installing and maintaining dog proof fencing around the perimeter of all its parks.

## **Drones and model aircraft**

The Council's parks are there for all to visit and explore. We have no problem with people enjoying their hobbies in our parks as long as they are doing so legally and with respect for other visitors.

### *Byelaws*

We have introduced byelaws in some of our larger parks; Southern Country Park, Bishop's Stortford, Northern Parkland, Bishop's Stortford, Lower Park Crescent, Bishops Stortford and Pishiobury Park, Sawbridgeworth.

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/sports-leisure-parks/rules-regulations-parks-open-spaces>

The Northern Parkland and Pishiobury Park byelaws were designed to include the following regulation on the basis of their location and previous record of people flying model aircraft.

### PART 5

#### MODEL AIRCRAFT

16. In this Part:

“model aircraft” means an aircraft which weighs not more than 7 kilograms without its fuel;

“power-driven” means driven by:

(a) the combustion of petrol vapour or other combustible substances;

(b) jet propulsion or by means of a rocket, other than by means of a small reaction motor powered by a solid fuel pellet not exceeding 2.54 centimetres in length;

or

(c) one or more electric motors or by compressed gas.

#### General prohibition

17. No person shall cause any power-driven model aircraft to:

(a) take off or otherwise be released for flight or control the flight of such an aircraft in the ground; or

(b) land in the ground without reasonable excuse.

This byelaw is still active and enforceable.

### *New legislation*

Since November 2019, anyone flying a drone or model aircraft between 250g-20kg must have it registered and be able to demonstrate that they are able to fly responsibly by passing an online theory test.

<https://dronesafe.uk/drone-code/>

If it's a "toy" drone that we are sure is under 250g then as long as the user is respecting others and not causing a nuisance and adhering to the "dronesafe" guidance, we wouldn't have any objection to them flying in our parks.

#### *Reporting misuse*

The Council is not empowered to enforce the law on this but we do have an interest in ensuring our customers are behaving responsibly and safely. Our advice to residents is that they should make the police aware of any incidents of concern on the 101 non-emergency number. If we are on site and find customers flying drones over 250g in our parks, we will ask them to stop if they cannot prove that the aircraft is registered.

If a customer makes us aware of what they believe to be unsafe behaviour involving such aircraft in one of our open spaces, our Enforcement Inspectors will monitor during their routine visits. If they see a drone or anyone that looks like they are piloting one they will speak to them if possible. However, the reality is that some of these aircraft have a long range, pilots can potentially fly them remotely from other locations.

Council officers may need to call the police themselves if somebody is flying dangerously and refuses to stop.

The Civil Aviation Authority provides some further guidance about reporting misuse of unmanned aircraft and drones:

<https://www.caa.co.uk/Consumers/Unmanned-aircraft/General-guidance/Reporting-misuse-of-a-unmanned-aircraft-and-drones/>

### **E-scooters in parks**

Whilst there is interest in developing alternative modes of transport, it still remains illegal to use privately owned electric scooters on footpaths or in public spaces. They are covered by the same laws and regulations that apply to all motor vehicles.

The law is explained by the government on their website should residents wish to find out about this in more detail:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/powered-transporters>

If residents witness illegal activity involving a privately owned e-scooter either on the highway or in one of our parks we would ask that they make the police aware. This should be through the non-emergency 101 number unless it is believed that the behaviour of the rider is such that immediate apprehension may be required. The Council are not empowered to enforce the laws relating to e-scooters. If the police find that there is an increasing problem identified in our parks through calls from the public and their own observations, they may, subject to available resources, be able to focus patrols on this and take appropriate action.

Our own monitoring officers will continue to observe areas for anti-social or illegal behaviour in our parks and would make the police aware in the same way.

The Council will of course revise this position should the law change to make these vehicles legal to use in a public place.

### **Graffiti in parks**

The Council is defined as a Principal Litter Authority and has a statutory duty (under the Environmental Protection Act 1990) to keep "relevant land" (that is, land in the open air that is under its control including the public highway) clear of litter and refuse. However, it does not have a duty to remove graffiti from property it does not own. Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003) the Council may issue a Graffiti Removal Notice requiring the owner of the land to remove the graffiti with a statutory 28 day period but this power can only be used against 'statutory undertakers' e.g. Highways authorities; telecoms and utility companies that have street furniture on the highway itself. It does not apply to private property adjacent to the highway.

In practice it is generally not constructive to impose such fines on private residents that we may be working with to try to resolve the problem. Our Environmental Inspectors are accredited in order to be able to take action against anyone caught defacing property. The Clean Neighbourhoods Act (2005) enables East Herts Council to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) to those found to be committing "Environmental Crime". This legislation allows the Council and

the residents to work together in keeping the streets, parks and open spaces free from graffiti, fly-posting and other Environmental Crime.

As part of this new legislation we will issue FPN's to anyone caught carrying out acts of graffiti. Graffiti in this context is classed as unauthorised writings or drawings on a surface in a public place. If residents in the area are able to identify the culprits we will take what action we can to bring them to justice.

If we can identify culprits there is also sometimes the opportunity to take further action with Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) or Anti-social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs).

The Council's policy is to remove racist or offensive graffiti from private structures as soon as it is identified. For non-racist/ offensive graffiti (e.g. tagging) we aim to identify and make contact with the land owner to request its removal.

We are also able to offer a service to residents to remove graffiti from their property charging them only the cost to the Council.

Where we take action to remove incidents of graffiti on behalf of residents, we need also to be aware of the liability for any damage caused to private property as a result of removing graffiti and will seek a waiver from property owners.

## **Helium Balloons and Sky Lanterns**

The Council bans the intentional release of sky lanterns and helium balloons from its land. We have taken this action to protect the environment as outlined below and to highlight to residents and event coordinators as well as Council tenants and property occupiers, the hazards in releasing lanterns and balloons.

This policy applies to all East Herts District Council holdings and land ownership.

The principles and commitments set out in this policy apply to all services and decisions of the Council and to our contractors and partners delivering council services on our behalf.

This policy does not apply to piloted hot air balloons.

### *Background*

- The release of sky lanterns and helium balloons can be a visual spectacle often used during festivals, anniversaries and as a part of large and small events.
- Sky lanterns and helium balloons have been identified as a hazard for wildlife and farm animals. Balloons, plastic parts, wire and ribbons can all be eaten by animals and wildlife causing a risk of choking or blockage leading to starvation and other internal injuries. In addition they can get mixed together with grass cut for silage which is then fed to livestock.
- Sky lanterns pose a further risk as a fire hazard with the potential to spark fires in crops, heath, moorland, forests and buildings.
- Plastics which are used in sky lanterns and balloons are a major source of aquatic and global marine pollution. They cause harm by entering the food chain as they are broken down by the sun and the action of water.
- The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) – is an internationally recognised charity for the protection of seas, shores and wildlife which has produced a detailed Pollution Policy and position statement on balloons and sky lanterns, asking UK Local Authorities to recognise balloons and sky lanterns as a form of littering and to ban all outdoor releases. This stance is actively supported by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), the National Farmers Union (NFU) and many other public organisations.
- Debris from both balloons and lanterns has been found littered across the County and District Council estate and wider countryside.

### *Principles and Commitments*

- The Council will not permit the release of any sky lanterns or helium balloons from land or property which it owns and/or controls.
- It is the responsibility of all Services to comply with and implement this policy as appropriate to their Service.
- The Council will highlight to residents and event organisers as well as Council tenants and property occupiers who enquire about releasing lanterns and balloons what the hazards are in releasing them and why the Council prohibits the release.

### *Notes*

It should be noted that this policy is intended to prohibit the deliberate release of sky lanterns (including helium balloons) such as the mass release of lanterns

and balloons at events. The council recognises that there may be instances where single helium balloons will be accidentally released into the environment such as may happen at children's parties.

## **Invasive plants**

- **Giant Hogweed on private land visible from highway**

The Council will carry out an inspection if Giant Hogweed is found on our own land and will remove it if we determine that it is presenting a risk to the public.

Residents more often notice this large weed in areas of land not owned by East Herts Council. The Council has no duty or powers to take action with regard to invasive plants on privately owned land.

There is information available on the government's web site about control measures should residents find Giant Hogweed on their own land and wish to find out more:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prevent-the-spread-of-harmful-invasive-and-non-native-plants>

Giant hogweed is one of the most commonly found invasive, non-native plants. The advice provided is that landowners do not have to remove these plants or control them on their land. This is with the exception of Japanese knotweed whereby if landowners allow it to grow on anyone else's property they could be prosecuted for causing a nuisance.

If residents spot Giant Hogweed near to the highway on land that they believe may be owned by the County Council or where pedestrians might easily come into contact with it the County Council may investigate and decide whether any action is necessary as part of their highway fault reporting assessments. Noxious weeds are likely to be categorised by County as a potential hazard but the risk level they attribute would depend upon the proximity of the infestation to a public area and the likelihood that pedestrians might come into close proximity with it. Noxious weeds are those covered by the Weeds Act 1959 and Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The prescribed weeds are: Ragwort, Broad Leaved Dock, Curled Dock, Creeping Thistle, giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and Spear Thistle.

Customers who have concerns about such issues on or near the highway should report them on the County's Highways Fault reporting web page:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/report-a-problem/report-a-street-light-or-pothole.aspx>

If it is on private land, they may decide not to investigate and if it is on County land they will make an assessment of risk and may decide not to take any action. If noxious weeds are found on highway verges managed as part of the agency agreement we have with County, they may commission us to action their removal but this is not required as part of our routine verge maintenance works that we carry out on their behalf.

- **Japanese Knotweed on East Herts Council land**

Japanese knotweed was brought to Britain as an ornamental garden plant in the mid-nineteenth century. Since then it has become widespread in the wild and can cause serious problems by displacing native flora and causing structural damage.

*The Council's Role*

The Council monitors the occurrence of Japanese Knotweed on the Council's own Parks, Open Spaces and verges and will take appropriate action when it is identified.

The Council does not have a responsibility to either monitor or control Japanese Knotweed on land that it does not own. We may record sightings on land for which the Council is not responsible to help us track its presence in the district but we will take no action relating to its control unless it is on our own land or on neighbouring land where it might potentially create a threat to Council Property.

Concerns relating to the illegal disposal or transporting of Japanese Knotweed can be reported by residents directly to the Environment Agency on their 24hr incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60. They will also provide advice about managing waste on their customer services line 08708 506 506.

Concerns relating to the illegal planting or spreading of Japanese Knotweed in the wild should be reported to the police. Local Authorities have some enforcement powers in this specific area but this has not been identified as a District Council responsibility in East Hertfordshire.

*Legislation*

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 provides the primary controls on the release of non-native species into the wild in Great Britain. It is an offence under section 14(2) of the Act to 'plant or otherwise cause

to grow in the wild' any plant listed in Schedule 9, Part II. This includes Japanese Knotweed.

- It is not an offence to simply have it growing in your garden or on your land and there is no legal requirement to control it if it is (unless doing so forms part of a legally binding contract or agreement with another party).
- Private landowners may be wise to consider how the weed on their own land might affect others if it were to grow outside their boundary.
- It is not listed in the Weeds Act and is not a 'notifiable' weed so there is no need to report its presence on your land (unless doing so forms part of a legally binding contract or agreement with another party).
- The Environmental Protection Act - Duty of Care - Regulations 1991 state that any material containing Japanese Knotweed taken off a site must be safely contained and disposed of at a licensed disposal site according to current guidelines.

#### *What we can do*

Where Japanese Knotweed is found on land within the Council's control the Council will take appropriate action to minimise the risk of spread and where appropriate, endeavour to eradicate it in line with current good practice.

No specific inspection of Council owned land is carried out to locate potential occurrences of Japanese Knotweed. There is no legal requirement to do so and this would be prohibitively time consuming. However, monitoring officers have been trained to identify the weed and to record any occurrence of it whilst carrying out other routine contract or open space inspections.

The Council's grounds maintenance contractor is responsible through our contract to report occurrences on council land and to ensure that all their staff are trained to do so.

A property check of land ownership may be undertaken to identify the adjacent landowner. This would only be necessary however if they are likely to be affected by any proposed control of the weed or they own the land where the weed may have originated from. If necessary, they will be notified of our intention to control the weed and of the risks to the environment if the weed is allowed to continue growing. The Council may offer assistance to apply the appropriate herbicide to control the weed on their land if it is present if they give their written permission.

If approached by a landowner wanting to control a patch that spreads onto Council owned land, the Council will co-operate with control measures provided



any other potentially affected landowners are willing to participate and providing that sufficient funds are available to do so.

If the weed is allowed to grow on adjacent land and is found to cause damage to Council property, appropriate action would be considered in relation to the offence to 'plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild'.

#### *General Control considerations*

The control and eradication of the weed is the responsibility of the land owner, and on sites where it is present, a policy of control leading to eradication is regarded as best practice.

Studies of the weed have been undertaken by various organisations. A chemical application applied to the whole leaf growth at a height of approximately 1 metre has been found to be the most satisfactory control during active growth. Control may be applied before the plant reaches this height dependent upon the density of the canopy. If the growth has become woody, the stems should be cut and the new growths sprayed. The height of the plant early on in the season may reduce as treatment continues.

Timing of the application will depend upon vegetative growth that season. This is likely to be April to May followed by subsequent applications as determined by our specialist contractor.

Ongoing treatment will only be continued where it can be justified and will be stopped once control has effectively prevented any regrowth. Each site will be inspected periodically to check for regrowth until the Council is confident that the plant at that location has been eradicated.

#### *Grass cutting and Japanese Knotweed*

As research has shown that the plant can be spread by the smallest amount of cut stem material' extreme care should be taken to ensure that areas of Knotweed are not cut, flailed or strimmed unless the work is being undertaken as part of an agreed control operation.

## **Benches, plaques and memorial trees**

- **donating a bench or plaque**

We will consider all applications for new benches or plaques. We will only install new benches where we feel there is a real need for them. We won't fill our parks

with too many benches but find that most requests are for larger parks where it is usually possible to accommodate a new one.

If the location is one where we have already identified the need for a new bench, we may consider funding the installation. If not then residents will be asked to pay the full cost. We will meet residents on site to agree the precise location. This will take into consideration preferences (a favourite view perhaps) but must also include a sensible approach to spreading our benches out to create convenient stopping points for visitors wishing to take a rest. We will not place them where they might encourage anti-social behaviour such as unreasonable noise near residential properties.

We generally use two styles of benches to retain some design consistency across our parks and because they are tried and tested to resist vandalism. In most of our parks we use the earth anchor Evergreen recycled plastic bench which has cast Iron end frames and boards made from recycled material.



In some of our rural parks we use a bespoke chunky oak bench designed and supplied to us by a local specialist (e.g. Pishiobury Park).

These come flat packed and can be installed by volunteers if that is appropriate.

We do not allow standalone plaques in our parks to commemorate trees. With the exception of benches, our view is that the place for memorials is the local churchyard or cemetery. Previously we have allowed brass plaques which residents have arranged for themselves. We have installed these by routing out to let the plaque sit flush with the surface, glued and screwed. However, we now prefer to have words engraved directly into the seat back which is far more vandal resistant.



This can either be retro fitted to an existing bench by replacing a slat or ordered with a new bench. Residents will be asked to pay

for the full cost of this but we will make the arrangement with the supplier on their behalf as part of an order for a new bench. Once we have agreed initial details, customers would email the precise text to us before we contact the

supplier who would then confirm to both parties. If retro fitted the resident would also pay the installation cost.

We've not found it necessary to set up any formal agreement to control these arrangements or to protect the authority. We would transfer an engraved slat free of charge if we need to replace a bench. We cannot fund a replacement if an engraved board is damaged or stolen.

- **Request to plant a memorial tree**

We are happy to support any initiative to plant new trees in our parks where we have space to do so and where it fits in with our wider plans. When we receive a request for a memorial tree we will consider whether the proposed location is appropriate in relation to the landscape and the environment. We will also discuss the cost. New trees planted as part of our normal programme can be the subject of vandalism but in some parks they fair better than others. Where we have sufficient funds we will sometimes install protection fencing but often we will simply plant a greater number of whips (very small tree saplings), some of which will reach maturity.

The location and the species are important. We aim to plant only native trees in our wider park landscapes. Ornamental trees are appropriate in a formal landscaping scheme or residential garden but not appropriate for our larger open spaces or reserves that are managed in the interests of biodiversity.

Some parks such as Hartham Common, whilst being a large park does not have a great need for more trees in its open areas. It is possible in some of these parks however that we can carry out some replacement planting in woodland areas, at perimeters where we may seek to soften fencing or in localised areas of formality.

If residents would like to consider planting a new tree with our guidance in a different location, we would be happy to discuss this.

We do not allow plaques near trees or any other feature in our parks to commemorate people but we can consider donations from families to plant a tree in memory of a loved one. We also encourage residents to think about engravings on our benches. *(see links to Memorabilia in parks / donating a bench or plaque)*

We can offer guidance on suitable trees and can help to find the right location. In dedicating a tree or bench to a park or open space, it is placed there for all users to enjoy and retained as public property.

- **Memorabilia in parks**

The Council understands that floral tributes and cards, while they remain, provide a visible and poignant focus of grief for families and friends. Other items such as articles of clothing, photographs and toys provide a very personal and heart felt reminder to families of their loved ones.

In the same way as many highway authorities, we are supportive of short term acts of remembrance, whether this is at the roadside or in a place that is special to family or the person grieved for. The County Council for instance allows flowers or small decorations to be placed at the roadside for one month after a collision.

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/births-deaths-marriages-and-citizenship/deaths/roadside-memorials.aspx>

They do not however allow permanent memorials on the roadside and remove them after a period of time, working with the police liaison officers and the families to deal with this as sensitively as possible.

East Herts District Council does not allow memorabilia such as toys, clothing and banners to remain on display in our parks. We do not allow plaques near trees or any other feature in our parks to commemorate people. We understand that some residents find comfort from these actions but our view is that the place for memorials is the churchyard or cemetery. We find that floral tributes or any other memorabilia compromise visual amenity and can hinder maintenance of our parks.

We will ask for items to be removed or will make arrangements to have them taken away. We may support residents for a period of two weeks while they consider where or how they might like to more permanently remember their relatives or friends.

We appreciate cooperation in this matter. If residents would like to consider a lasting memory in one of our parks, we can offer a service in some circumstances to donate a bench with an engraving or plant a tree (see links to donating a bench or plaque / request to plant a memorial tree)

In dedicating a bench to a park or open space, it is placed there for all visitors to enjoy and use.

## Metal detecting and magnet fishing

Whilst we endeavour to allow as many diverse activities on our open spaces as we can, we regret that we cannot permit metal detecting on our land.

We have reflected on the National Trust approach to guide us.

We know most metal detectorists have a genuine interest in history and archaeology, and take care to report their finds, but we need to guard against finds being removed without proper recording or archaeological supervision. All our land has archaeological potential and is managed for the benefit of everyone – when finds are taken out of context we lose a piece of the jigsaw, making it harder for us to care for our archaeology.

Some detectorists are covered by National Council for Metal Detecting insurance and we are encouraged that they follow their guidelines for responsible metal detecting. We do not however, have the resources to evaluate those wishing to metal detect on our land, to assess any project they may have designed or to decide which of our parks might or might not be suitable.

Where we believe that archaeological investigations are needed to explore the history of one of our parks or to support our own developments, we will employ a specialist company. On these occasions we work closely with the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Team to ensure that our consultants are coordinating effectively and operating within the relevant legislation and guidance.

We commissioned a company; Oxford East Archaeology for example, to explore history below the ground at Grange Paddocks to support our plans to develop the leisure centre.

## Pests and nuisance from wildlife

- **Pest Control**

The Council has no duty to control rats, wasps or other pests across the district and is not able to provide a service to do so. There are professional companies widely available that are able to offer such services.

We will carry out pest control on our own land (open spaces, buildings etc) where we believe there is a problem. This will not however include attempting to trap or poison rats in our parks. We see rats in our parks particularly where there is a water source and where there is food to sustain them. Unfortunately

where there is litter or where visitors feed ducks with bread, this provides them with a food source.

We try to encourage visitors not to drop litter and to feed ducks with appropriate food that is neither harmful to ducks nor left as food for rats. (see link Feeding ducks)

Trying to reduce rat populations in our parks with pest control methods would be ineffective and a waste of resources. It would also risk harming wildlife present in our parks such as other small mammals and birds.

A wasps nest in one of our parks is unlikely to present an actionable risk to the public but we will investigate where residents have legitimate concerns.

#### *Service for Vulnerable Residents*

We are however able to provide a pest control service for vulnerable residents, that is residents on income related benefits who own their own homes.

If residents rent their property then they should contact their landlord or housing association as they are the owner of the building and are ultimately responsible for the building's condition.

The council only provides a service, for vulnerable customers of owner occupied properties. For other customers we recommend that they use an approved company which has signed up to one of the industry bodies such as the [npta.org.uk](http://npta.org.uk) or the [bpca.org.uk](http://bpca.org.uk)

The company that council use to deliver a service to vulnerable customers is Glendale but they are not currently able to provide any external service to other residents. If residents are employing a company to provide pest control, we advise them to get a number of quotes, confirm what is actually included in the treatment cost and get recommendations from others or use a trade review site such as [checkatrade.com](http://checkatrade.com).

More information on how to prevent pests can be found on our web site:

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/environmental-health/pest-control>

- **Bird Droppings from trees**

We occasionally receive calls about birds roosting in the trees near to houses and creating a mess.

Trees growing on highway verges are either owned by or under the management of the County Council.

We inspect all our own trees regularly and carry out any maintenance that is needed to manage the risk of damage or injury. Any nuisance presented by birds however, is not the fault of the tree or the Council.

The Council values the trees under its care and does not accept that any nuisance experienced from bird droppings, from birds roosting or nesting in a tree is sufficient cause to fell or carry out pruning. It is indeed an offence to disturb birds while they're nesting, building a nest, in or near a nest that contains their young.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wild-birds-protection-surveys-and-licences>

Pruning trees is not the solution, as the birds will simply roost on the remaining branches or other nearby trees. Even when trees are pruned, they will continue to be inhabited by wildlife. Healthy and attractive trees are an asset to the environment.

If vehicles are affected, residents are advised to consider, garaging, covering, regular cleaning or alternatively parking away from the tree.

Where residents own trees in which birds are roosting there are alternative actions that residents might want to consider:

- Installation of commercially available pigeon spikes onto the level limbs where birds are likely to land
- Use of strung wires placed along the landing areas
- Application of a non-toxic bird repelling caulk
- Installation of audio devices
- Use of 'mock' birds, targeted towards the correct species

The Council will not fund these sorts of initiatives on its own trees.

- **Bees around Ivy**

The Ivy Bee (*Colletes Hederae*), is a species of plasterer bee, and are harmless. They are a relatively new species to the UK. Many residents report these bees as nesting in large patches of Ivy, mostly during the autumnal months of September through to November. The females collect pollen from the ivy flowers, whilst the males dig burrows and prepare for winter. These bees are often found in large numbers but are harmless and best left alone. Their work is vital to their survival, and the Council advises that residents do not disturb them.

- **Feeding ducks**

It is important to know what is healthy to feed ducks as the wrong food can have serious consequences. Please don't feed bread to the ducks in our parks. We have provided some information to explain why this is at:

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/sports-leisure-parks/feeding-ducks>

## Play areas

- **Sand play – dog and cat faeces**

The vast majority of people we talk to about play areas with sand are fully in favour of these facilities. Not only is it a safe surface to minimise the risk of head injuries, it is also a fun play and learning element in its own right and adds an attractive character to a play area.

For instance; at Trinity Close in Bishop's Stortford the "bowl" characteristic tucked into the hillside provides a more natural and welcoming feel than it would had we just used grass matting or rubber pads. The huge sand pit in Hartham Common play area in Hertford has proved incredibly popular and provides a great platform for the water play facilities.

We find that sand is very popular wherever we install it.

We install fences and gates on most of our play areas. These are installed for a range of reasons, sometimes where busy roads or rivers may present a potential hazard. They are generally installed though to prevent dogs from entering play spaces designed for young children to minimise the risk of Toxocariasis, a rare infection caused by roundworm parasites. Humans can catch it from handling soil or sand contaminated with infected animal faeces. Roundworm parasites are most commonly found in cats, dogs and foxes, and are more likely to affect young children. This is because children are more likely to come into contact with contaminated soil when they play and put their hands in their mouths. Older children are generally less likely to do this.

We believe, along with many other authorities across the country and leading play safety experts, that the benefits of sand are considerable and outweigh the low risk of any health issues from dog or cat droppings, particularly with the control measures we put in place.

Whilst cats are able to climb fences and gain access to our play spaces, the risks of Toxocariasis are reduced by preventing access to dogs. Dogs are excluded from all our play areas through the Public Spaces Protection Orders.



<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/environmental-health/dog-fouling-dog-control>

All our play areas with sand are inspected and maintained at least three times per week which includes raking through the sand to remove any debris or cat faeces. The wider park areas are also visited regularly to clear litter.

- **Play area noise and frequent use (Antisocial behaviour)**

We appreciate that noise from play areas can become an annoyance for some at certain times. While many of us are now working from home, we are experiencing different pressures and it is understandable that we might prefer a quiet environment during periods when we would not normally have been at home. However, we must stress that these are public open spaces.

Play areas are an essential part of the community, providing somewhere for young people to play and socialise. Most of our play areas have been in their current location for many years and do not present any significant problems.

Young people and parents are likely to gather at play areas on their way home from school. We would expect a certain amount of noise generated from this and do not agree on the face of it that children playing in or around a play area is unreasonable behaviour.

We do have a Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour team at East Herts Council who are able to investigate concerns in more detail. Residents can find out more about their work here:

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/community-wellbeing/anti-social-behaviour>

We advise that residents consider the information provided and, if residents would like to seek further assistance, submit concerns through the Anti-Social Behaviour Report Form with a little more information about how often residents are disturbed by noise and whether it is always at the same time. Our team can then consider this further and advise whether they feel that the behaviour residents are describing is unreasonable or not, and if so how they may be able to help.

## **Risk assessments in parks**

The Council carries out routine inspections of all its parks and open spaces including those with woodland areas.

These are predominantly undertaken through our grounds maintenance contract. Their purpose is to ensure that the areas are as safe, secure and fit for use as is possible (having regard to practicability and available resources), and to ensure that any areas or items requiring reactive maintenance identified during the course of an inspection are speedily addressed. These inspections will be undertaken in two ways; frequent routine visual checks and less frequent operational inspections to a more detailed level. Routine inspections are planned but not formally recorded, operational inspections are planned and recorded in detail.

These inspections are supplemented by audited client inspections to assess open spaces and to monitor contract performance.

We also commission detailed inspections of trees in our parks.

- **Rope swings in Woodlands**

The Council carries out risk assessments in relation to its operations which are periodically reviewed and updated. These note considerations for open space inspections including any obvious signs of play such as worn grass on slopes (running, makeshift sledges, bmx bikes etc), clearings in woodland, graffiti, ropes in trees, concentrated litter collection indicating social gathering spots. Our inspectors will decide whether these should be removed, made safer, encouraged and/or monitored.

There is of course a good argument that “natural” play is important and that young people are actually very good at assessing risks. We like where possible to encourage and facilitate young people making use of our open spaces for play. There have however been incidents across the country involving serious injury where rope swings have been erected without the benefit of professional guidance.

In practice, rope swings are generally removed as they have been installed without the Council's input or any informed risk assessment that we are aware of and may not therefore provide for safe use.

## **Scattering of Ashes on East Herts Council Open Spaces**

We aim to ensure our parks and open spaces can be used and enjoyed by as many people as possible for as many diverse activities as we can. We consider

how we can accommodate people's needs fairly and sensitively. As with any request to carry out an activity in our parks we consider how that might affect other users, the environment and our maintenance regimes.

We are aware families are increasingly choosing to scatter ashes at favourite beauty spots or in places their loved ones were fond of. The general consensus amongst professionals in this field is that there are no legal restrictions to prevent this but it is widely accepted that relatives should seek the landowner's permission.

If able to satisfy some simple criteria, we will provide our permission, offering our condolences at such a sad time. If we decide a requested location is inappropriate, we will try to suggest a more suitable site. There may be occasions when we are unable to help.

We will not agree to people scattering ashes in all our public parks and gardens, especially in urban areas. Many of our parks are relatively small and visited by high numbers of people. If relatives wish to conduct a ceremony, it is unlikely they will have the privacy or space that they need to make it a special event. Some of our parks are environmentally sensitive or need to be maintained to high ornamental standards.

Some sites however, such as The Warren in Hartham Common or the woodland areas surrounding Pishiobury Park are natural spaces with a fair degree of seclusion where residents would be able to scatter their relative's ashes without adversely affecting others' enjoyment of the park or causing any damage to the environment.

If choosing to scatter on a river on our land – we would still like to be consulted. Residents don't need special permission, but should consult the Environment Agency's guidance:

<https://www.scattering-ashes.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/GEHO0306BKIK-e-e.pdf>

Once we have agreed a location in a suitable park, we simply ask that people let us know when they would like to proceed so we can make a note in our events database. This information will not of course be shared outside the authority but means that, should we receive any enquiries, our team will be aware of the permission.

We receive some requests for memorial plaques in our parks and do not allow these other than upon benches. We will not permit residents to use trees or

other features in the park as memorials or to leave flowers or personal items. We feel that this sort of remembering of loved ones is best confined to our local cemeteries. If residents wish to arrange a bench engraving we can provide details of the cost of benches and discuss a suitable location. We may decide in some of our parks that there are already sufficient benches.

The planting of a memorial tree may be authorised where there is sufficient space and need. Species choice is determined by the surrounding landscape.

We ask that people do not make any permanent marks or leave items at locations where they have scattered ashes or where a tree has been authorised. We are happy to provide a map of the chosen site so that relatives are able to record the location. We appreciate relatives are likely to want to remember the site and record it for future generations and feel that this is the best way to do this.

We suggest to those disposing of ashes that they might provide a courtesy note to Parish Councils as Burial Authorities. In 50 years' time there may be mystified searchers or historians and a routine search place will still be burial records. A note in them would be a help to researchers of all kinds in the future.

We have reviewed some of the information available about scattering ashes and ask that residents consider the following:

- Scatter in a secluded area, ideally away from other people and avoiding the main pathways
- Be aware of the environment - avoid areas of special conservation and try not to disturb the ground
- Try to avoid busy periods such as Bank Holidays, if choosing a popular spot then sunset or sunrise will be less busy
- Try to avoid windy days, be aware of the direction of wind and proximity of family members and other park users
- Avoid scattering on land where animals are grazing
- It is probably better to hold a discreet, informal gathering rather than an official ceremony
- Residents might find it easier to use an ashes scattering container known as a 'scatter tube' to help scatter the ashes
- Ashes should not be scattered in one solid mass on the ground and should be scattered evenly

Things to consider when making a record of the day:

- **Where** – Keep it simple but be detailed, so for example: Hazel Wood, 50m to the east of the main bridge
- **When** did the resident conduct scattering? eg. dawn, midday, sunset
- The date – Any particular reason why residents have chosen this date? A birthday or anniversary?
- **Why** – Why residents have chosen to scatter there, this might help future generations to understand the significance
- **Who** – Who was there at this special occasion
- Details/Readings – did everyone sprinkle some ashes? Did anyone say a few words?

We do not require the completion of any formal application request. Relatives can email our Customer Services Team at [customer.services@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@eastherts.gov.uk) or telephone us on 01279 655261 to arrange for one of our Enforcement Officers to consider their request.

Their request will be logged on our customer enquiry database. The inspector will consult with colleagues before making a decision. Once a location has been agreed we only need confirmation of the relative's full name and address and the approximate time and date they are planning to visit. We don't need to know the precise location but ask that they keep slightly away from the main footpaths and follow our general guidance.

## Shrubs / shrub beds / hedges

- **Shrub bed / hedge encroachment to boundary**

All our hedges should be pruned twice a year, some are faced off to keep them tidy and to minimise encroachment across paths. Some are also “topped” to keep them to a manageable height.

All our shrub beds are pruned once every year and then visited regularly through the year to control weeds and prune back any encroachment across paths or signs.

Most hedges are pruned back to previous year’s growth and shaped to a tidy hedge of approximately 800mm wide and 1200mm to 1800mm high.

Shrubs are pruned to various heights according to species and location.

The Council does not reduce the height of hedges to afford access to resident’s walls or fences.

The purpose of shrub beds and hedges planted by developers when houses are built, are to enhance the visual amenity for all residents and often to hide or “screen” fences from public spaces.

After having adopted any such areas for maintenance, we maintain the landscape as it was intended. Walls should have been designed by developers to withstand the presence of any trees and hedges included in their landscape schemes.

The Council advises residents who install fences adjacent to hedges in the public amenity to ensure that they are removable from the inside should they wish to access the outer side of panels.

Shrub beds may sometimes be reduced in height (to approximately 400mm) on a rotational basis (e.g. every 5 or 7 years) where it is beneficial to the species and where it is more cost effective than annual pruning, e.g. Laurel.

Our grounds maintenance contractor will remove any litter in the hedge base or shrub bed as part of each pruning operation. Any other litter picking would be carried out through any scheduled street cleansing operations under the Waste contract.

We are confident in most cases that our maintenance regime is sufficient to keep vegetation tidy and to minimise the potential for any damage. If residents believe however, that vegetation on Council owned land has caused any damage to their property (such as a garden wall, fence or residents house) through subsidence or root/branch movement, we would advise that they consult their household insurance provider to arrange an investigation. If residents wish to pursue a claim, guidance can be found at:

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/about-east-herts-0/insurance-claims>

- **Ivy growing over boundary from a Council open space**

Ivy is a woody stemmed, self-clinging climber that can grow relatively quickly to cover fences, walls and buildings. English Ivy supports itself by aerial roots and where these penetrate, cracks or joints they may cause structural damage – but, sound masonry is generally unaffected.

In our wider parks, where wildlife conservation is of consideration, ivy is not removed.

Ivy uses trees and walls for support, allowing it to reach upwards to better levels of sunlight. It is not a parasitic plant and has a separate root system in the soil, absorbing its own nutrients and water. It forms an beneficial and naturally occurring part of woodland habitats.

We will not remove ivy that is growing across a boundary but residents are at liberty to prune it at the boundary line. If it is growing in an ornamental shrub bed and encroaching other plants, we may remove it during the winter remedial works.

If residents feel that ivy is encroaching from property owned by the Council and causing potential damage, then residents should report concerns to our Customer Services Team. One of our inspectors will investigate.

- **Hedge or shrubs close to residential fence, concerns about encroachment and height**

The Council does not reduce the height of hedges to afford access to resident's walls or fences. Hedges would have been planted by developers to "screen" such infrastructure for the benefit of the public amenity. Once the Council adopts any such areas for maintenance we will maintain the landscape as it was intended. Walls should have been designed by developers to withstand the presence of any trees and hedges included in their landscape schemes.

The Council advises residents who install fences adjacent to hedges in the public amenity to ensure that they are removable from the inside should they wish to access the outer side of panels.

Shrub beds may sometimes be reduced in height on a rotational basis (e.g. every 5 or 7 years) where it is beneficial to the species and where it is more cost effective than annual pruning, e.g. Laurel.

If residents are concerned that vegetation may have caused any damage to their property such as the brick supporting wall through subsidence or root/branch movement, we would advise that residents consult their household insurance provider to arrange an investigation. If residents do wish to pursue a claim, guidance can be found at:

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/about-east-herts-0/insurance-claims>

- **High Hedge complaints**

Some residents may be unhappy with the height of their neighbour's hedge where it is affecting reasonable enjoyment of their property. The Council is empowered under the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 (High Hedges) to consider disputes. Our planning enforcement team may be able to help.

Information about high hedges can be found on the [Planning Portal website](#) and in [High Hedges Complaints: Prevention and Cure \[768KB\]](#).

To complain about a high hedge, this is a chargeable service of £515 (at 2021 fees and charges). If residents are receiving benefits they may be eligible for a discount. Please complete our [High Hedges Complaint Form \[199KB\]](#)

## **Trees owned by the Council**

- **Tree safety**

The Council operates an independent tree risk management inspection programme to inspect our trees regularly and diligently. Our inspection methods are reviewed regularly and updated wherever necessary to keep up with nationally recognised good practice.

Where our inspections reveal there is any cause for concern regarding the safety of trees, we endeavour to take appropriate action. We investigate



each request we receive and refer to the findings of the latest inspection as well as considering the position of the trees in relation to customer's properties.

The Council invests considerably in this robust inspection process to fulfil our duty of care to residents and to minimise the risk of injury or damage to property. Whilst we do all can to achieve this however, trees are naturally growing in the environment and not always predictable.

We prioritise the budgets available to manage our entire tree stock to prune or remove those trees which do present a risk, ensuring that the most urgent cases are dealt with first.

We can reassure residents that we employ a specialist arboricultural consultancy practice. They are involved in a wide range of relevant work including planning consultancy, large scale computerised tree surveys, legal expert work, subsidence, insurance consultancy, state of the art tree management software and general consultancy advice relating to both trees and the landscape.

All their arboricultural surveyors delivering the service have a minimum level 3 qualification in Arboriculture and are LANTRA accredited to ensure a high level of assessment for all trees. Quality management systems, key performance indicators and quality checks are carried out by a senior consultant regularly on site and all survey data is signed off by a senior member of staff before being issued.

The Council recognises that regular tree inspections are crucial to minimise risk to the public and to present a strong case against potential allegations of negligence. It is committed to maintaining a defensible and responsible system of tree risk management.

All trees and tree groups are individually assessed to determine their "risk category" based on their proximity to high value targets in relation to their height and size. Trees or tree groups capable of falling on a very high or high value target are inspected annually (Category 1). All other trees and tree groups are inspected every three years or more frequently if specifically recommended by the surveyor (Category 2).

Our consultant uses the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) method for assessing the risk from trees. All arboricultural staff engaged in our inspections are trained, registered users. Tree safety management under

this system is a matter of limiting the risk of harm from tree failure while maintaining the benefits conferred by trees. Although it may seem counterintuitive, the condition of trees should not be the first consideration. Instead, tree managers should consider first the usage of the land on which the trees stand, and in turn this will inform the process of assessing the trees.

The system moves the management of tree safety away from labelling trees as either 'safe' or 'unsafe' and thereby away from requiring definitive judgements from either tree assessors or tree managers. QTRA quantifies the risk of significant harm from tree failure in a way that enables tree managers to balance safety with tree values and operate to pre-determined limits of tolerable or acceptable risk.

By quantifying the risk from tree failure as a probability, QTRA enables a tree owner or manager to manage the risk in accordance with widely applied and internationally recognised levels of risk tolerance.

While defects in trees are relatively common, only a small minority of trees with observable defects require works. However, the possibility of structural failure is assumed to increase with time, therefore where trees are not to be re-inspected for three years the surveyor is justified in taking a more cautious approach to making recommendations than where 12-15 month inspections are scheduled.

QTRA is based on data calculated over a 1-year period. A detailed assessment of the Risk of Harm (RoH) informs the prioritisation of resources to deal with all "urgent" and "necessary" works as soon as is practically possible within one year. Other "appropriate" works are dealt with on a priority basis through the year with any remaining resource capacity. The Council sets aside a reasonable budget to meet these demands but in years where "urgent" and "necessary" works increase, the level of "appropriate" works may decrease.

"Appropriate" works might include landscape improvement, good arboricultural practice, established maintenance, specialised pruning of ancient or veteran trees, managing nuisance or clearing basal vegetation for access.

This process of realising "tolerable" or "acceptable" risk enables us to demonstrate that risks are managed reasonably and proportionately (As Low As Reasonably Practicable ; ALARP) in relation to our duty of care whilst making the best use of our finite resources and maximising the many benefits our trees provide.

Our inspection contractor works closely with our maintenance contractor to ensure our budgets are prioritised effectively and recommended works are carried out efficiently.

The Council is committed to providing a responsible regime of tree risk management that reduces risk from injury and property damage. However trees are living organisms and may fail despite our best efforts. We aim to ensure that trees do not present an unacceptable risk to residents and that our policy and decisions are defensible in the event of claims.

If residents would like further information, for the methodology of the QTRA system currently used, the link below provides further information.

<https://www.qtra.co.uk/cms/index.php?section=4>

The Council will only commission works based on current survey results. **We will not carry out works to trees that have not been recommended as part of our rigorous inspection process** other than in the unusual circumstances where the condition or status of a tree has suddenly changed. High winds may for instance have fractured a branch that requires pruning.

Trees will naturally move in the wind and make noises as they sway which can sometimes create concern for residents. The guidance we receive from our expert consultant does not conclude however that all large trees near to buildings must be removed or reduced in size. We reassure our customers that carrying out unnecessary heavy pruning to trees is not recognised arboriculturally as necessary to prevent a tree from falling.

Some pruning may be required for example where a tree has been unexpectedly exposed to the prevailing wind or where it has developed a weakness or disease. In some instances heavy pruning can in fact cause structural weaknesses in the tree that can create problems in the future.

Where a tree is healthy it is far better to monitor it and carry out work in response to regular inspections. (see link How does the Council keep its trees safe?)

- **Tree dropping fruit/seeds/leaves onto resident property**

The Council values its trees across the district including those on its own land.

We recognise that actions taken need to be proportionate to the actual risks involved and the importance of trees in our environment. Our inspection

regime is thorough and carried out by specialist arboriculturalists qualified to undertake risk assessments. Management decisions are taken in light of the wider benefits of trees; aesthetic, ecological, environmental and sociological. Trees offer many benefits; they reduce carbon dioxide levels, filter and absorb pollution, absorb noise, produce oxygen, reduce the stress of modern lifestyles, encourage wildlife, have an aesthetic value and offer shade and shelter.

Trees are naturally growing, shedding organisms. Leaves, twigs, fruit litter, pollen and dead branches are a normal consequence of living with trees and are not sufficient justification for felling or pruning.

**We will not fell or prune any trees without sound evidence that the tree is likely to cause damage or injury** or where for conservation reasons, its removal will benefit the wider environment.

If a tree presents a real risk of damage or injury we will take appropriate action to deal with it. A build-up of leaves in a gutter or covering a patio may be seen as a nuisance to some people but fallen leaves are a natural phenomenon and there is no obligation or duty for a landowner to collect or dispose of leaves that fall onto neighbouring land. We would advise that residents don't locate structures or features beneath the canopy of a tree that might naturally shed debris.

We don't pick leaves up from our own trees falling in our parks, other than on hard surfaces or in shrub beds when they are pruned. We recognise that leaves are a crucial part of the natural cycle of plants growing in the environment.

The Council does not own or manage trees on highway verges. These are the responsibility of the County Council. If residents have concerns about a County owned tree they can make them aware through their fault reporting process at:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/report-a-problem/report-a-street-light-or-pothole.aspx>

Honeydew deposits during the summer months are produced by aphids which feed on the leaves of trees. This is common with tree species such as Lime and Sycamore. Heavy infestations of these insects can create significant deposits of honeydew which will fall on anything under the tree and drift in the wind. This feeding activity is a natural process and there is no practical treatment which will control insect numbers or prevent honeydew secretion.

The Council manages thousands of trees across the district, many of which are adjacent to gardens, footpaths, roads and parking areas. We receive complaints about some of these trees in relation to fruit dropping onto patios, leaves blocking gutters, sap from aphids falling onto cars and droppings from bats and birds falling onto cars and garden sheds. It would be incongruous with our commitment to protect trees to accept their loss for such reasons.

The Council is not legally obliged to clean honeydew deposits from an adjoining property, vehicle or structure. **We will not fell or disfigure trees to deal with this issue.**

If vehicles are affected, residents are advised to consider, garaging, covering, regularly cleaning or alternatively parking away from the tree. One approach residents may consider is to install the type of plastic spikes on branches above their property used to prevent birds from roosting. A tree surgeon may be able to advise on this alternative.

- **Tree/shrubs: allergies and pollen**

Whilst the Council sympathises with allergy sufferers, it would not be practical nor beneficial to our environment to stop planting all the trees and shrubs which create pollen. Many of these trees are native to the UK and are an important part of our landscape. Oak for example is one of the main allergenic pollen and affects about 20% of sufferers. As one of the countries most loved and splendid trees and one which creates habitat for a huge variety of other species it would not be acceptable to stop planting it. If we were to adopt such a strategy we would also of course need to consider the future of the grass areas in our parks as grass pollen is the most common trigger of hay fever in the UK.

The reality is that pollen from a wide number of species travels freely in the wind and does not remain in the close vicinity of each plant. We understand that it may be possible to reduce symptoms by choosing plants carefully for resident's own contained gardens but this is neither practical nor would it be effective for the wider landscape.

We are mindful of what we plant and how our schemes impact the wider environment. We are conscious of how plants can have an adverse effect on people but we cannot remove certain plants or modify our planting programmes in relation to allergies.

- **A Council tree overhanging resident's property.**

Residents are only permitted to cut back growth to the boundary line of their property and no further.

Our general advice regarding vegetation overhanging property boundaries is that householders are legally within their rights to remove any branches that are overhanging the boundary up to and no further than the line of the boundary and preferably no higher than 3 metres.

This does not allow residents to reduce the height of a Council owned tree in any way. It is important to note that any such pruning may damage the visual appearance of a tree and could seriously destabilise it. For that reason the Council would only agree to any major pruning to one side of trees near boundaries if it can be achieved sympathetically to the tree and the landscape.

We manage the trees and woodlands in our parks and open spaces carefully and in line with good practice. We commit to a programme of responsible management which will often include thinning woodlands (removing a number of trees) where they have been purposely planted too close together. Woodlands are often planted at a high density in the knowledge that some trees fail and to provide the opportunity to choose the best trees to reach maturity.

- **A Council tree blocking light from resident garden**

The Council will not prune trees to afford light to residents.

We operate an independent tree risk management inspection programme to inspect our trees regularly and diligently. Where our inspections reveal there is any cause for concern regarding the safety of trees, we endeavour to take appropriate action. We investigate each request we receive and refer to the findings of the latest inspection as well as considering the position of the trees in relation to customer's properties. Any change to the condition of trees is assessed as part of the ongoing inspection regime. We prioritise the budgets available to manage our entire tree stock to prune or remove those trees which do present a risk, ensuring that the most urgent cases are dealt with first.

Many residents have concerns about the amount of light they feel is obscured from their property by vegetation. The only practical solution to this would be to either fell a huge proportion of specimen trees and trees in

our woodlands or to commit to a long term exercise of reducing the height of thousands of trees at the cost of many thousands of pounds every year. This would be to the detriment of our trees and woodlands.

We advise all customers there is no legal entitlement to light in this respect. There are common law rights relating to developments which might affect an uninterrupted use for a number of years such as the building of a new extension. This does not however relate to trees present in the landscape.

We can only consider the effects of trees or shrubs with regard to any physical effects that they may have to properties. Our view is that it would not be fair to all residents for the Council to spend a high proportion of funds on ongoing pruning or felling that is not necessary for the health and safety of the tree but only to afford light.

Our general advice regarding vegetation overhanging property boundaries is that householders are legally within their rights to remove any branches that are overhanging the boundary up to and no further than the line of the boundary and preferably no higher than 3 metres. This does not allow residents to reduce the height of a Council owned tree in any way. It is important to note that any such pruning may damage the visual appearance of a tree and could seriously destabilise it. For that reason the Council would only agree to any major pruning to one side of trees near boundaries if it can be achieved sympathetically to the tree and the landscape.

We manage the trees and woodlands in our parks and open spaces carefully and in line with good practice. We commit to a programme of responsible management which will often include thinning woodlands (removing a number of trees) where they have been purposely planted too close together. Woodlands are often planted at a high density in the knowledge that some trees fail and to provide the opportunity to choose the best trees to reach maturity.

We understand resident's natural concerns with regard to the safety of the woodland trees adjacent to their property. The Council will not however, prune trees to afford light to residents. We can explain in more detail why this is and what positive work we are able to carry out in our woodlands.

We operate an independent tree risk management inspection programme to inspect our trees regularly and diligently. Where our inspections reveal there is any cause for concern regarding the safety of trees, we endeavour to take appropriate action. We investigate each request we receive and refer to the

findings of the latest inspection as well as considering the position of the trees in relation to customer's properties. If we find that a tree is in a condition that might cause injury or damage, we carry out the necessary work to keep it safe.

Any change to the condition of trees in the future will be assessed as part of the ongoing inspection regime. We prioritise the budgets available to manage our entire tree stock to prune or remove those trees which do present a risk, ensuring that the most urgent cases are dealt with first.

Trees will naturally move in the wind and make noises as they sway which can sometimes create concern for residents. The guidance we receive from our expert consultant does not conclude however that all large trees near to buildings must be removed or reduced in size. We reassure our customers that carrying out unnecessary heavy pruning to trees is not recognised arboriculturally as necessary to prevent a tree from falling. Some pruning may be required for example where a tree has been unexpectedly exposed to the prevailing wind or where it has developed a weakness or disease. In some instances heavy pruning can in fact cause structural weaknesses in the tree that can create problems in the future. Where a tree is healthy it is far better to monitor it and carry out work in response to regular inspections.

The Council values its trees across the district including those on its own land. We recognise that actions taken need to be proportionate to the actual risks involved and the importance of trees in our environment. Our inspection regime is thorough and carried out by specialist arboriculturalists qualified to undertake risk assessments. Management decisions are taken in light of the wider benefits of trees; aesthetic, ecological, environmental and sociological. Trees play an important role to reduce carbon dioxide levels, filter and absorb pollution, absorb noise and produce oxygen. They can reduce the stress of modern lifestyles, encourage wildlife, have an aesthetic value and offer shade and shelter. They are naturally growing, shedding organisms.

Leaves, twigs, fruit litter, pollen and dead branches are a normal consequence of living with trees and are not sufficient justification for felling or pruning. We will not fell any trees without sound evidence that the tree is likely to cause damage or injury or where for conservation reasons, its removal will benefit the wider environment. Whilst we understand that some residents see trees near their properties as a nuisance, we cannot fell any tree because it is dropping seeds or leaves. This would set a precedent which could result in the loss of thousands of trees growing in our urban areas.



Some residents have concerns about the amount of light they feel is obscured from their property by vegetation. The only practical solution to this would be to either fell a huge proportion of trees in our woodlands or to commit to a long term exercise of reducing the height of thousands of trees at the cost of many thousands of pounds every year. This would be to the detriment of the trees and the woodland. We advise all customers there is no legal entitlement to light in this respect. There are common law rights relating to developments which might affect uninterrupted use for a number of years such as the building of a new extension. This does not however relate to trees present in the landscape.

We can only consider the effects of trees or shrubs with regard to any physical effects that they may have to properties. Our view is that it would not be fair to all residents for the Council to spend a high proportion of funds on ongoing pruning or felling that is not necessary for the health and safety of the tree but only to afford light.

Our general advice regarding vegetation overhanging property boundaries is that householders are legally within their rights to remove any branches that are overhanging the boundary up to and no further than the line of the boundary and preferably no higher than 3 metres. This does not allow residents to reduce the height of a Council owned tree in any way. It is important to note that any such pruning may damage the visual appearance of a tree and could seriously destabilise it. For that reason the Council would only agree to any major pruning to one side of trees near boundaries if it can be achieved sympathetically to the tree and the landscape.

The felling of trees in woodlands without good reason is the sort of work that we would seek to prosecute against if carried out without permission in a Conservation Area. If the Council were to carry out such work on its own land it would set a very poor example to local contractors and residents who have trees in their own gardens to manage and care for. We provide a consistent response to all requests for what we believe to be unnecessary pruning or felling. Our advice supports the Council's corporate objectives to protect the environment.

Our woodlands provide an important wildlife habitat and an attractive natural backdrop for local people to enjoy. It would be incongruous with our commitment to manage our parks responsibly for both wildlife and people, to consider removing woodland trees unnecessarily. We manage our trees and woodlands carefully and in line with good practice. We commit to a

programme of woodland management which will often include thinning (removing a number of trees) where they have been purposely planted too close together. Woodlands are often planted at a high density in the knowledge that some trees fail and to provide the opportunity to choose the best trees to reach maturity. They are often planted by developers to screen new properties from view in order to protect the visual amenity or to compensate for a loss of biodiversity.

In some instances where developers have planted near to properties, we may decide to remove trees that we believe are too close and to create a clear buffer zone between property and woodland, usually around 3.0m in width. This is not always popular as some residents see the vegetation behind their property as a natural security measure to prevent others from reaching their boundaries. We have carried out such work where we believe it is has an overall benefit to the woodland and neighbouring residents. In some instances we have also thinned (removed some trees) or coppiced trees further into the woodland if it is appropriate for the type of woodland and species. Our prime objective is good woodland management which may sometimes help to lessen any undesired impact of trees on our neighbours.

- **Branches from a Council tree are touching resident building**

If a tree is touching private property (dwelling, house, garage etc) and is owned or managed by the Council, we may take action to avert the nuisance by the most appropriate means.

In many cases, the solution will be for the Council to prune the tree, but in rare circumstances, where a tree is found to have health conditions or has been planted too close by the developers from whom the Council has adopted land, it may need to be removed.

- **Trees blocking light to solar panels**

The Council supports sustainable alternatives to producing energy. However, it is not reasonable to ask us to commit to pruning or removing hundreds of trees where they might block light.

Residents should ensure that panels are orientated to maximise their potential but must take into consideration the location of nearby trees when doing so. If residents have too much tree cover near their property, they may not be able to benefit from solar panels.

- **Trees affecting TV/Satellite reception, or hanging wires**

We receive some requests from residents to carry out work to our trees in relation to light, television reception and other concerns. Our view is that it would not be fair to all residents for the Council to spend a high proportion of funds on ongoing pruning or felling that is not necessary for the health and safety of the tree.

We advise all customers that there is no legal entitlement to light and we are not aware of any legal obligation for landowners to remove trees or branches that may be affecting a television signal.

The Council can only consider trees or shrubs with regard to their physical effects on the structure of properties. It would be poor arboricultural practice to reduce the height of any tree on a regular basis unless the health of the tree was in question or there was a significant risk of damage or injury to the public.

We appreciate concerns about the poor television reception in some areas but would advise that there might be various reasons for this. The signal for instance may be weak or resident's antennae or dish may require lifting higher or boosting.

Trees are a crucial part of our landscape and play an important ecological role. A commitment to remove or reduce the height of trees across the district where they may perhaps be affecting television signals is unacceptable for the Council in terms of both cost and the protection of our environment.

Statutory undertakers such as telecommunications companies will carry out pruning to trees on the highway to protect the integrity of their system and have exception to do so on protected trees. These statutory undertakers, or contractors working at their request, are advised to liaise with local authorities prior to carrying out work to trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order. It is expected that all vegetation control is carried out in accordance with best arboricultural practice. They should also take care to not contravene the provisions of legislation protecting plants and wildlife.

- **CCTV and Security Cameras are blocked by Council owned tree branches**

If residents have security cameras protecting their property, there is no reason for these to be directed into a public space.

Residents may prune branches hanging across their boundary.

- **Tree roots lifting my patio, pathway or drive.**

We do not routinely inspect or repair root damage made to private property, even if residents feel the tree is located on land owned by East Herts Council.

Cutting the roots of any tree is generally ill-advised as it may affect the tree's health and stability. If a tree is covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), or if it stands within a Conservation Area, an application will be required before root pruning can take place.

We are confident in most cases that our maintenance regime is sufficient to keep our trees safe and to minimise the potential for any damage. If residents believe however, that a tree on Council owned land has caused any damage to their property (such as a garden wall, fence or house) through subsidence or root/branch movement, we would advise that residents consult their household insurance provider to arrange an investigation. If residents wish to pursue a claim, guidance can be found at <https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/about-east-herts-0/insurance-claims>

- **Trees damaging drains**

It is rare for trees to block up or cause damage to drains. In order for the roots to gain access into a drainage system, the drain must already be damaged. Instances of underground pipes being broken by the growth of tree roots are rare.

The Council will not undertake the topping, thinning or felling of trees to prevent roots entering damaged pipes. The necessary repairs of the defect in the pipe are the only certain remedy that will prevent future problems.

Modern materials and joints will significantly reduce pipe damage and subsequent root encroachment in the future.

- **Council tree with fungus growing on it**

There are many types of fungi that live happily on trees. However, if the fungal growth is close to the base of the tree, or from the stem or branches, this may suggest wood decay.

Removing fungal fruiting bodies from trees will not get rid of the fungus since, by the fruiting stage, it will already be well established. They are an

invaluable habitat for insects and beetles and should not be removed from the tree.

We inspect all our trees on a regular basis and our inspectors are expert in the identification of fungi and the effect if varying types on trees. Our inspectors are likely therefore to have noticed anything that might present a risk in one of our trees. Their recommendation for work, if they decide it necessary, is added to our system and work will be prioritised according to the level of risk.

If residents believe that a tree on Council owned land is diseased and unsafe, then please report this to us. We can check the most recent inspection. If the tree is on a resident's own property and they are unsure if its condition, then residents are advised to contact an experienced arborist for a professional opinion.

- **Council owned trees that are covered in ivy**

Ivy is a climbing, scrambling plant abundant as a groundcover shrub in many types of woodland. It has a variety of conservation benefits and forms an integral part of a woodland's habitat.

It supports many species of wildlife which use ivy for nesting and hibernation for insects, birds, bats and other small mammals. Nectar, pollen and berries of ivy are a nutritious food resource for insects and birds during autumn and winter when there is little else about. It also provides food for some butterfly and moth larvae.

In a public open space, there is a need to balance certain considerations for its retention: tree safety, conservation and aesthetics. Ivy causes no direct damage to trees. However, in some situations, it may be considered unsightly and more importantly, can create problems for efficient management by obscuring structural defects and fungal fruiting bodies. It can in some cases increase the weight of a tree's crown and the 'sail' effect during the wet, windier, winter months, when deciduous trees have shed their leaves.

The Council only undertakes the removal of ivy from trees where considered necessary to aid the health of an ailing tree or to support the inspection of tree.

- **Cracks/splits in a Council tree.**

Cracks and splits in a trunk can be an indicator of an unstable tree.

Residents should report any such concerns issues to us through our Customer Services Team. Our inspection staff can make an initial assessment and call in our specialist arborist consultant if necessary.

The Council cannot offer a service to inspect trees that it does not own.

## Trees on the highway

- **The street lights obscured by trees**

Trees on the highway are owned or managed by the County Council. We carry out grass cutting, hedge and shrub pruning on their behalf as part of an agency agreement but we do not manage their trees.

If residents would like to report an issue of concern as a fault to the County Council they can do so through their web site at:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/report-a-problem/report-a-highway-fault/what-type-of-fault-are-residents-reporting.aspx>

East Herts Council will undertake work to trees owned or managed by the Council, to ensure that the presence of trees does not substantially stop the light omitted by lighting columns in our parks or open spaces.

Residents should contact Customer Services or report this through our web site and we will investigate and carry out pruning if it is necessary.

- **Tree, bush or hedgerow encroaching on a public footpath from a private garden**

East Herts Council are not empowered to intervene where a resident has allowed plants in their garden to obstruct a footpath.

Residents may report this to the County Council via their online fault reporting page, on their website

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/report-a-problem/report-a-highway-fault/what-type-of-fault-are-residents-reporting.aspx>

The County Council manage the safety of the highway and may, if they feel there is a problem, contact the householder under the powers granted to them through the Highways Act.

They may ask the householder to carry out the work necessary to remedy the problem or they may arrange for the work to be carried out and re-charge the householder. In that instance they may ask us to arrange for our contractor to carry out work under the agency agreement we have with them.

This is entirely at the discretion of the County Council according to their resources and assessment of the issue.

## General Tree Health

- **Inspection of an unsafe tree on privately owned or common land**

Generally the Council cannot take responsibility for somebody else's tree.

It would not be appropriate for the Council to offer a service to inspect trees on land for which it is not responsible. Apart from the complexities of using council funds to maintain land for which it is not responsible, there would be liability issues with us identifying works that might need to be carried out without having the means to do so.

It is very unusual for common land not to be owned by somebody. If residents are concerned about a tree on neighbouring land should try to identify a responsible party. They should then aim to impress upon the owners that they have a duty of care to the public to ensure their tree is not presenting a risk.

Any resident can apply for a land search through the Land Registry.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/land-registry>

Another potential source of information might be the County Council who are responsible for identifying common land and ensuring that it is properly registered to protect its future. They may be able to advise from their own records whether land has been identified as common land and, if they have no record of an owner, may be able to advise further.

East Herts Council does have powers under section 23 of The Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976 in relation to dangerous trees in the district. Our view however is that this is designed to provide a remedy where there is imminent risk of injury or damage from a tree where there is not an immediate solution. Residents may for instance have been unable to find record of who

owns a tree which has been identified as dangerous or there is uncertainty as to who may own the land upon which the tree is growing. The powers referred to in the Act are at the Local Authorities' discretion. They allow us to take remedial action to avert a risk.

In most instances there is no imminent risk of danger and therefore no immediate remedial work required. We would only consider acting under these powers to avert an immediate risk of danger and then seek costs from the owner.

In some instances residents have asked the Council to use these powers to intervene where they believe their neighbour is not carrying out work to a tree which they believe is necessary. This however is not a matter for the Council. We would urge residents who are not able to resolve concerns about a tree in their neighbour's property to work through a process of mediation to find a resolution. Citizen's Advice may be able to provide some advice on how to do this.

Residents can obtain expert advice from a tree specialist to determine whether their concerns about a tree are well founded or not.

We have a considerable task in managing our own trees (in excess of 70,000) and must focus our limited budgets carefully to ensure that we are acting reasonably to minimise risk.

The Council is not able to provide any specialist advisory service to determine the condition of a tree or to mediate on behalf of residents where they are in dispute with a neighbour.

- **Tree advice**

We have a considerable task in managing our own trees (in excess of 70,000) and must focus our limited budgets carefully to ensure that we are acting reasonably to minimise risk.

The Council is not able to provide any specialist advisory service to determine the condition of a privately owned tree and does not have sufficient resource to offer a general advice service.

We may sometimes discuss issues with residents in relation to an application for works to a protected tree in their garden once they have made an application for tree works and as part of our determination process. Residents must make an application for tree works before we are able to



discuss their tree with residents and in most instances we are able to inspect and determine the application without needing to do so.

We would suggest that residents approach a local tree surgeon or consultant to obtain expert advice on the health and management of their trees.

Details of tree contractors and consultants operating throughout the UK are available from the Arboricultural Association.

<https://www.trees.org.uk/Find-a-professional>

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## Equality Impact Analysis Form

### 1. Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) Form

<b>Title of EIA (policy/change it relates to)</b>	Parks & Open Spaces Strategy – 2022-27	<b>Date</b>	December 2021
<b>Team/Department</b>	Leisure & Parks / Operations		
<b>Focus of EIA</b>  What are the aims of the new initiative? Who implements it? Define the user group impacted? How will they be impacted?	<p>This strategy replaces the outgoing Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and draws from previous parks improvements to outline the Council's commitment to parks and opens spaces. It also sets out key areas of focus for the next five years.</p> <p>Implemented by the Council with support from partners.</p> <p>Parks and open spaces are potentially used by a wide range of residents from all age groups and ethnicities.</p> <p>Impact is related to access and facility improvements and working with other departments on initiatives to engage with users through volunteering.</p>		

**Please note:** Prepopulated data for protected categories other than Age and Gender come from 2011 census results<sup>1</sup> on the district, the Age and Gender data comes from ONS mid-year estimates<sup>2</sup>. If the service has specific demographic data for service users/residents than this should be used instead.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland>

## 2. Review of information, equality analysis and potential actions

Please fill in when appropriate to the change. If it does not, please put N/A

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff		What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advance equality of opportunity,</li> <li>• eliminate discrimination, and</li> <li>• foster good relations</li> </ul>
Age	Under 20 20-24 25-29 30-44 45-59 60-64 65-74 75-84 85-89 90	24.2% 4.5% 5.5% 19.8% 22.9% 5.4% 9.6% 5.6% 1.6% 0.9%	Age data was not collected through the consultation but evidence from routine inspections suggests a broad age range use our parks. The consultation did not reveal any concerns from residents about any age related discrimination.	Our service needs to accommodate young people including both the very young and older teenagers both of whom require opportunity to play and socialise through to the other end of the spectrum including older people who may have mobility issues and also benefit from opportunities to socialise.	We provide a good range of equipped play areas designed to cater for the full range of ages and are mindful of creating opportunities for natural play. We ensure our parks are as accessible as possible with appropriate gates and parking where possible. We install seating at intervals throughout our parks. We commit to continue delivering a high quality of service in this respect. We continue to commit to delivering

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					opportunities for volunteer work through our Friends Groups and are aware that these are enjoyed to a good extent by the 45-74 yr brackets capturing the larger age profile for the district.
<b>Disability</b>  Page 165	11,663 households in East Herts have one person in household with a long-term health problem or disability.		The consultation did not find any issues relating directly to any long term health or disability problems. 36% of consultees advised that “accessible to all” is one of the three most important things that people	Physical access was noted as a priority as we develop our open spaces. The consultation feedback mentioned better access for cyclists, parking for disabled visitors and interventions to improve wet weather access. Attention to	These have been and will continue to be picked up in our individual greenspace action plans which are routinely revised. The strategy commits to continue focusing on good access for all users.

<b>Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010</b>	<b>What do you know?</b> Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	<b>What do people tell you?</b> Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	<b>What does this mean?</b> Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	<b>What can you do?</b> All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advance equality of opportunity,</li> <li>• eliminate discrimination, and</li> <li>• foster good relations</li> </ul>
		believe parks should offer. When asked "what is the one most crucial thing we should focus on to meet our customers' needs in our parks and open spaces" the relevant options were Health & Wellbeing (6%) and Accessibility (6%) both demonstrating very limited concern.	footpath maintenance was also raised.	

<b>Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010</b>	<b>What do you know?</b> Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	<b>What do people tell you?</b> Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	<b>What does this mean?</b> Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	<b>What can you do?</b> All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advance equality of opportunity,</li> <li>• eliminate discrimination, and</li> <li>• foster good relations</li> </ul>																						
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	Neither this consultation, nor our previous public engagements relating to green space action plans have identified any data relating to gender reassignment.	Our strategy consultation found no issues raised about gender reassignment.	We have been conscious not to discriminate against this group.	Continue awareness.																						
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Neither this consultation, nor our previous public engagements relating to green space action plans have identified any data relating to pregnancy or maternity.		We have been conscious not to discriminate against this group.	Continue awareness.																						
<b>Race</b>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><b>White</b></td> <td><b>95.47%</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British</td> <td>90.25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Irish</td> <td>1.14%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gypsy or Irish Traveller</td> <td>0.04%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other White</td> <td>4.04%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Mixed/multiple ethnic groups</b></td> <td><b>1.61%</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>White and Black Caribbean</td> <td>0.45%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White and Black African</td> <td>0.15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White and Asian</td> <td>0.62%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Mixed</td> <td>0.38%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Asian/Asian British</b></td> <td><b>1.95%</b></td> </tr> </table>	<b>White</b>	<b>95.47%</b>	English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	90.25%	Irish	1.14%	Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.04%	Other White	4.04%	<b>Mixed/multiple ethnic groups</b>	<b>1.61%</b>	White and Black Caribbean	0.45%	White and Black African	0.15%	White and Asian	0.62%	Other Mixed	0.38%	<b>Asian/Asian British</b>	<b>1.95%</b>	Our strategy consultation found no issues raised about race discrimination.	There could be potential for our promotional and guidance material both on our web site and on the ground to discriminate.	We have been conscious not to discriminate against any ethnic group. We could find ways to engage with smaller ethnic groups as we develop our services. This will require guidance to secure meaningful opportunities.
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	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Indian</td> <td>0.73%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pakistani</td> <td>0.15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bangladeshi</td> <td>0.20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Chinese</td> <td>0.37%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Asian</td> <td>0.49%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Black/African/Caribbean/Black British</b></td> <td><b>0.71%</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>African</td> <td>0.43%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Caribbean</td> <td>0.22%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Black</td> <td>0.07%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Other ethnic group</b></td> <td><b>0.26%</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Arab</td> <td>0.10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Any other ethnic group</td> <td>0.16%</td> </tr> </table>	Indian	0.73%	Pakistani	0.15%	Bangladeshi	0.20%	Chinese	0.37%	Other Asian	0.49%	<b>Black/African/Caribbean/Black British</b>	<b>0.71%</b>	African	0.43%	Caribbean	0.22%	Other Black	0.07%	<b>Other ethnic group</b>	<b>0.26%</b>	Arab	0.10%	Any other ethnic group	0.16%			
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<b>Religion or belief</b>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Christian</td> <td>62.75%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Buddhist</td> <td>0.32%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hindu</td> <td>0.45%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jewish</td> <td>0.33%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Muslim</td> <td>0.72%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sikh</td> <td>0.12%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other religion</td> <td>0.32%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No religion</td> <td>27.75%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Religion not stated</td> <td>7.26%</td> </tr> </table>	Christian	62.75%	Buddhist	0.32%	Hindu	0.45%	Jewish	0.33%	Muslim	0.72%	Sikh	0.12%	Other religion	0.32%	No religion	27.75%	Religion not stated	7.26%	Our strategy consultation found no issues raised about religious discrimination.	There could be potential for our promotional and guidance material both on our web site and on the ground to discriminate.	We have been conscious not to discriminate against any religious group. We could find ways to engage with smaller religious groups as we develop our services. This will require guidance						
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				to secure meaningful opportunities.
Sex/Gender	The district is 51% female and 49% male	The data indicates an even spread of need for female and male visitors to our parks. Our consultation has raised no issues from our customers in relation to sex or gender.	We are confident that our services provide an equal opportunity for all groups. Some research suggests that play areas may not always offer as much opportunity for play or socialising for girls as for boys.	Our strategies in the past and going forward are to ensure that we offer a wide range of play types including those traditionally enjoyed by girls such as netball. We ensure that equipment and seating is designed to offer socialising for all young people. There is a general increase in interest in football by girls and so less risk of our Multi Use Games Areas which offer football and basketball being gender biased.

<b>Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010</b>	<b>What do you know?</b> Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff		<b>What do people tell you?</b> Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	<b>What does this mean?</b> Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	<b>What can you do?</b> All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advance equality of opportunity,</li> <li>• eliminate discrimination, and</li> <li>• foster good relations</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Neither this consultation, nor our previous public engagements relating to green space action plans have identified any data relating to sexual orientation.			We are confident that our services provide an equal opportunity for all groups.	We can be mindful during our engagement with users and as we develop our services of any potential discrimination in this area.
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	Single Married Civil partnership Separated Divorced Widowed	30.5% 52.3% 0.2% 2.3% 8.6% 6.2%	Our consultation has revealed no evidence of any discrimination against any of these groups	Our parks and open spaces are freely accessible to any visitor and offer sports, leisure and relaxation to all.	We can be mindful during our engagement with users and as we develop our services of any potential discrimination in this area.
<b>Assessment of overall impacts and any further recommendations</b>					
<p>The services offered through our parks and open spaces, the consultation undertaken and the strategy going forward are designed to offer a wide range of activities and benefits to all residents.</p> <p>Parks are crucial places for residents and visitors to relax, play and keep fit, supporting our health and wellbeing, no better emphasised than through the pandemic experience. We offer to ensure they remain fit for purpose; have good access, are clean and welcoming and that we continue positive engagement with users.</p> <p>We are confident that there is neutral impact from this strategy and no issues of concern.</p>					

### 3. List detailed data and/or community feedback which informed your EqIA (If applicable)

<b>Title</b> (of data, research or engagement)	<b>Date</b>	<b>Gaps in data</b>	<b>Actions to fill these gaps: who else do you need to engage with?</b> (add these to the Action Plan below, with a timeframe)
<b>Prepopulated EHC data</b>		<b>None identified</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Eight week consultation process receiving 179 responses to an online questionnaire.</b>	<b>Aug to Sept 2021</b>	<b>None identified</b>	<b>n/a</b>

**4. Prioritised Action Plan (If applicable)**

Impact identified and group(s) affected	Action planned	Expected outcome	Measure of success	Timeframe
NB: These actions must now be transferred to service or business plans and monitored to ensure they achieve the outcomes identified.				

**EqIA sign-off:** (for the EQIA to be final an email must sent from the relevant people agreeing it or this section must be signed)

<b>Lead Equality Impact Assessment officer:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Directorate Management Team rep or Head of Service:</b>	<b>Jess Khanom-Metaman</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>5.1.22</b>
<b>Author of Equality Impact Analysis:</b>	<b>Ian Sharratt</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>23.12.21</b>

## East Herts Council Report

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 18 January 2021

**Report by:** Councillor Graham McAndrew –Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability

**Report title:** Introduction of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging tariffs

**Ward(s) affected:** All

### Summary

- The purpose of this report is to outline the proposal to introduce a tariff for the use of electric vehicle (EV) charging points within the car parks managed by the Council in line with the Council's fees and charges policy.

### RECOMMENDATION FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**A)** To endorse the principle of, and approach to, charging for the use of electric vehicle charging points in Council managed car parks, as outlined in this report, in order to inform the Executive's consideration of the proposal for adoption.

#### **1.0 Proposal(s)**

1.1 To introduce a charge for use of newly installed EV charging points within Council managed car parks and other assets in line with the Council's fees and charges policy.

1.2 To, over time, remove the current free EV charging points within the Council's car parks and replace them with points

requiring a tariff to use, subject to funding for upgrading the infrastructure, in line with the tariff charging described in this report.

## **2.0 Background**

2.1 Council's July 2019 declaration on climate change stresses the importance of tackling climate change both in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and planning for the local impacts of climate change.

2.2 In line with Council's commitment to environmental sustainability and aspiration to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, there is a commitment to investigate environmental opportunities within Council managed car parks and install EV charging points, subject to a viable funding model.

2.3 This is supported by a recommendation from the member parking task and finish group in 2019 to "Establish an initial 5% of bays in EHDC car parks as electric vehicle (EV) charging bays and commit to increasing this proportion in anticipation of growing demand". Council, in February 2020, endorsed monitoring deliverability of this aspiration subject to funding availability.

2.4 The Council provides the following EV charging points:

- four EV charging points, 7 kWh capacity, in Gascoyne Way Multi Storey, Hertford (7kWh)
- six, up to 11kWh capacity, in Causeway, Bishop's Stortford, two of which are currently used for the East Herts e-car pool. It is anticipated these chargers will move to Link Road car park

- three, 7 kWh capacity, at Wallfields, Herford, two of which are within the Council's own car park for staff and members.
- 2.5 The Council has recently undertaken a number of major capital developments including a new leisure centre in Bishop's Stortford (Grange Paddocks) and Northgate End car park (due to complete in May 2022). Both projects include the installation of new charging bays, the new Grange Paddocks leisure centre will have 2 bays and the new Northgate End MSCP will have 54 EV bays. In addition, three EV charging points are in the process of installation at Bell Street car park, Sawbridgeworth.
- 2.6 Subject to successful external funding, there is an aspiration to extend EV charger provision further.
- 2.7 Given the capital investment into this new infrastructure and ongoing maintenance requirements, a charging mechanism is proposed to ensure operational costs are recovered to reduce the burden on the Council's medium term financial plan.
- 2.8 The number of electric vehicles registered in East Herts has significantly increased over the last 12 months to approximately 1,300 vehicles (2020/21 Department for Transport, DfT data). By 2027/28 this figure is expected to be in the order of 26,000 vehicles (25% of the total number of cars in the district) based on DfT/UK Power Network trajectory models. Thus, there is considerable risk that the electricity cost to the authority will increase sharply without a tariff in place to recover cost and so, in line with the Council's over-riding fees and charges policy that service users should make a direct contribution to the cost of providing services (both discretionary and statutory) at their point of use a tariff as described in paragraph 2.11 is proposed.

- 2.9 A Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) is already in place to allow enforcement of EV charging bays in Council managed car parks. The key feature of the scheme limits use of the EV vehicles to a maximum of 5 hours charging to enable a greater number of vehicles to make use of the facilities. It is anticipated that as further EV chargers become available this approach will be reviewed.
- 2.10 In addition to paying for electricity, the normal parking tariffs will apply for those car parks. The proposal for tariff introduction is aimed at recovering costs associated with the operation and maintenance of the chargers themselves.
- 2.11 The tariff proposed is 25p/kWh for fast chargers (7kW). A breakdown of costs can be found below with commercially sensitive information in **Appendix A**.

<b>Cost Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Average cost of electricity across EHDC estate	20p/kWh
Provider and Council costs	5p/kWh
<b>Proposed charge (included VAT)</b>	<b>25p/kWh</b>

- 2.12 Based on 25p/kWh, a typical charge for 3hrs would be:
- $25p \times 7kWh \times 3hrs = £5.25$  in addition to the cost of parking itself.
- 2.13 It is proposed that, as with all the Council's fees and chargers, the tariff will need to be regularly reviewed.
- 2.14 In terms of payment, the appointed provider would manage all customer contact including the payment app. Costs will be reconciled with the provider either quarterly or six monthly.



2.15 For information, tariffs imposed by other Hertfordshire authorities are highlighted below. The table below demonstrates that the proposed charge is at the mid-point locally.

<b>Authority</b>	<b>Tariff charge</b>
North Herts	42p/kWh for 45kW output (max 3hrs)
Watford	32p/kWh for 7kW output
East Herts proposal	25p kWh for 7-11 kWh output
Stevenage	17p/kWh for 7kW output

2.16 A strategy for the implementation of *future* electric vehicle bays and infrastructure is in the process of being developed and will be put forward for member consideration in due course. In the meantime, however, some *current* projects are nearing completion and a pricing strategy needs to be determined before these can be made available for the public and be enforceable.

### **3.0 Reason(s)**

3.1 The Council has committed to its climate change declaration made in 2019 and subsequently the development of an environmental sustainability action plan commits the Council to the installation of EV chargers where appropriate and it is financially viable to do so. In line with the new fees and charges policy, the Council needs to recover its costs of operation and maintenance to reduce any anticipated pressure on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). Therefore a charge is being proposed for EV charging points.

## **4.0 Options**

- 4.1 Do nothing – NOT RECOMMENDED. Not charging for EV charging use will result in additional pressure on the Council's revenue position. Furthermore, without establishing a means to enable additional chargers to cover their costs, it will not be possible to install new chargers, thus compromising the Council's role in facilitating reductions in carbon emissions.
- 4.2 Introduce charges but not on a cost recovery basis – NOT RECOMMENDED as this would only lessen the financial burden on the Council of EV charging infrastructure and thus, as discussed under the 'do nothing', this approach would compromise the Council's ability to install chargers and encourage carbon reduction.
- 4.3 Implement a cost recovery approach as proposed, including coverage of lifecycle cost/capital investment – RECOMMENDED for the reasons outlined in this report.

## **5.0 Risks**

- 5.1 Risks associated to a charged service include potential for increased customer contact should the software not work. This is mitigated by the provider managing all customer contact.
- 5.2 There is reputational risk associated with the introduction of any new charge which could possibly be amplified by being seen as a disincentive to switching to an e-vehicle. In response to this, however, the principle of paying to use an EV charger is now well-established nationally with only a minority of chargers in operation still providing free electricity.

## **6.0 Implications/Consultations**

6.1 A number of implications have been considered as part of this report.

### **Community Safety**

Yes – the cost of repairing any damaged/vandalised charging points is incorporated as part of the replacement programme.

### **Data Protection**

Yes – Terms and conditions of the payment app will be managed directly between the user and provider.

### **Equalities**

Yes – the trend for EV payment is cashless and via apps and could possibly have a differential impact on those less familiar with technology. It is considered, however, that those using an e-vehicle are likely to be familiar with more modern methods of payment and so it is considered that no mitigation is required.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

Yes – this supports the Council's climate change declaration and associated actions plans.

### **Financial**

Yes – the approach fulfils the requirements of the fees and charges policy. A breakdown of costs can be found in **Appendix A**.

### **Health and Safety**

No

### **Human Resources**

No

### **Human Rights**

No

## **Legal**

Yes – Terms and conditions with provider has been considered by the Council’s legal team. Standard terms and conditions have been accepted.

## **Specific Wards**

No

### **7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

7.1 **Appendix A** – Breakdown of costs – confidential

7.2 **Appendix B** – Equalities Impact Assessment

## **Contact Member**

Councillor Graham McAndrew, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability

[Graham.McAndrew@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:Graham.McAndrew@eastherts.gov.uk)

## **Contact Officer**

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## **Report Author**

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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## Equality Impact Analysis Form

### 1. Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) Form

<b>Title of EIA (policy/change it relates to)</b>	Introduction of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging tariffs	<b>Date</b>	15.12.21
<b>Team/Department</b>	Parking – Operations		
<b>Focus of EIA</b>  What are the aims of the new initiative? Who implements it? Define the user group impacted? How will they be impacted?	<p>The aim of the policy is to introduce a tariff for the use of electric vehicle charging bays in East Herts Managed car parks.</p> <p>The key user group impacted are motorists who own electric vehicles as they will now need to pay for charging their vehicles in East Herts managed car parks (where the infrastructure allows receipt of payment)</p>		

**Please note:** Prepopulated data for protected categories other than Age and Gender come from 2011 census results<sup>1</sup> on the district, the Age and Gender data comes from ONS mid-year estimates<sup>2</sup>. If the service has specific demographic data for service users/residents than this should be used instead.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland>

## 2. Review of information, equality analysis and potential actions

Please fill in when appropriate to the change. If it does not, please put N/A

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advance equality of opportunity,</li> <li>• eliminate discrimination, and</li> <li>• foster good relations</li> </ul>
Age	<p>*A study for Department for Transport (2015) found that:</p> <p>Most private EV owners are currently middle-aged, male, well-educated, affluent, and live in urban areas with households containing two or more cars and with the ability to charge at home.</p> <p>Looking ahead to the next 3-5 years, and based on insights from more developed EV markets, the basic socio-demographic profile of EV owners in the UK is not likely to change significantly</p> <p>The evidence suggests more people in this same demographic are going to start buying EVs</p>	<p>In conversation with our Environmental Sustainability Co-ordinator, we learned that the uptake of those with electric vehicles are overwhelmingly amongst company car drivers (as it is financially &amp; tax-wise easier to select a low emission vehicle). A third of electric vehicle owners are those who are leasing those vehicles privately (across all age groups), but</p>	<p>If more people within the middle-aged demographic buy and use electric vehicles then it could be forecasted that the electric vehicle buying age 'could normalise with the broader new vehicle buying trend' and that the 'gender distribution could be more balanced'. <a href="http://www.fuelinstitute.org">www.fuelinstitute.org</a> (EV consumer behaviour, pg4)</p>	<p>There are few ways to mitigate the impact of this action, however the impact does not appear to discriminate or negatively impact those with protected characteristics.</p>



<b>Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010</b>	<b>What do you know?</b> Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	<b>What do people tell you?</b> Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	<b>What does this mean?</b> Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	<b>What can you do?</b> All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advance equality of opportunity,</li> <li>• eliminate discrimination, and</li> <li>• foster good relations</li> </ul>
		people who have been purchasing them have been at the higher age range, due to a higher income.		
<b>Disability</b>	11,663 households in East Herts have one person in household with a long-term health problem or disability.	A report from the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers (RIDC) has found that two thirds of disabled people fear that they would find electric car charging “either difficult or very difficult to navigate” in its current form. <a href="#">(Study reveals disabled drivers’ concerns about EV chargers   Autocar)</a>	The rise in tariff for electric vehicle owners may indirectly make electric vehicles more accessible for disabled car drivers, if there is a decline in uptake and therefore more available charging ports for the disabled. However the navigation issue in its current state will	East Herts could consider making the charging ports for electric vehicles more accessible for disabled users.

<b>Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010</b>	<b>What do you know?</b> Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	<b>What do people tell you?</b> Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	<b>What does this mean?</b> Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	<b>What can you do?</b> All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advance equality of opportunity,</li> <li>• eliminate discrimination, and</li> <li>• foster good relations</li> </ul>
			remain unchanged.	
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	No reliable data at this time			
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	No reliable data at this time			
<b>Race</b>	<p><b>White</b> English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British 90.25%</p> <p>Irish 1.14%</p> <p>Gypsy or Irish Traveller 0.04%</p> <p>Other White 4.04%</p> <p><b>Mixed/multiple ethnic groups</b> 1.61%</p> <p>White and Black Caribbean 0.45%</p> <p>White and Black African 0.15%</p> <p>White and Asian 0.62%</p> <p>Other Mixed 0.38%</p> <p><b>Asian/Asian British</b> 1.95%</p>	In conversation with our Environmental Sustainability Co-ordinator, we learned that the uptake of those with electric vehicles are overwhelmingly amongst company car drivers (as it is financially & tax-wise easier to select a low	If some BAME groups are less likely to own electric vehicles, then the budget change would have would be less of an impact on this group. Any impacts would be financial and not of a discriminatory nature.	There is little action to take on this example.

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advance equality of opportunity,</li> <li>• eliminate discrimination, and</li> <li>• foster good relations</li> </ul>																								
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 187</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">Indian</td> <td style="text-align: right;">0.73%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pakistani</td> <td style="text-align: right;">0.15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bangladeshi</td> <td style="text-align: right;">0.20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Chinese</td> <td style="text-align: right;">0.37%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Asian</td> <td style="text-align: right;">0.49%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Black/African/Caribbean/Black British</b></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><b>0.71%</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>African</td> <td style="text-align: right;">0.43%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Caribbean</td> <td style="text-align: right;">0.22%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Black</td> <td style="text-align: right;">0.07%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Other ethnic group</b></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><b>0.26%</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Arab</td> <td style="text-align: right;">0.10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Any other ethnic group</td> <td style="text-align: right;">0.16%</td> </tr> </table>	Indian	0.73%	Pakistani	0.15%	Bangladeshi	0.20%	Chinese	0.37%	Other Asian	0.49%	<b>Black/African/Caribbean/Black British</b>	<b>0.71%</b>	African	0.43%	Caribbean	0.22%	Other Black	0.07%	<b>Other ethnic group</b>	<b>0.26%</b>	Arab	0.10%	Any other ethnic group	0.16%	<p>emission vehicle). A third of electric vehicle owners are those who are leasing those vehicles privately (across all age groups), but people who have been purchasing them have been at the higher age range, due to a higher income.</p>		
	Indian	0.73%																										
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Arab	0.10%																											
Any other ethnic group	0.16%																											
	<p>Due to the recognition of shared socioeconomic barriers amongst BAME groups, it could be speculated that this group is less likely to buy an electric car,</p>																											

<b>Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010</b>	<b>What do you know?</b> Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff		<b>What do people tell you?</b> Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	<b>What does this mean?</b> Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	<b>What can you do?</b> All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advance equality of opportunity,</li> <li>• eliminate discrimination, and</li> <li>• foster good relations</li> </ul>
			however a more granular look at the different races is needed to support this claim, as there is disparity in income between different ethnic groups.		
<b>Religion or belief</b>	Christian Buddhist Hindu Jewish Muslim Sikh Other religion No religion Religion not stated	62.75% 0.32% 0.45% 0.33% 0.72% 0.12% 0.32% 27.75% 7.26%	Due to the recognition that intersectionality exists between BAME groups and those belonging to minority faiths (e.g Buddhism, siks, hindu, jewish etc), there could be a shared impact on the number of BAME residents impacted by this budget change.	If some religious groups are less likely to own electric vehicles, then the budget change would have would be less of an impact on this group. Any impacts would be financial and not of a discriminatory nature.	There is little action to take on this example.

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff		What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advance equality of opportunity,</li> <li>• eliminate discrimination, and</li> <li>• foster good relations</li> </ul>
Sex/Gender	The district is 51% female and 49% male		Men, particularly those aged between 30 and 45 years with higher levels of education, working in the not-for-profit sector or academia, are <b>more than twice as likely to own electric cars than women.</b> <a href="#">Women most likely to buy electric cars - if asked right - electrive.com</a>	The rise in price for electric vehicle charging may indirectly impact men more than women, however the impact will be negligible and not of a gendered nature.	There is little action to take on this example.
Sexual orientation	An estimated 14,000 identify as LGBT+		No reliable data at this stage.		
Marriage and civil partnership	Single Married Civil partnership Separated Divorced	30.5% 52.3% 0.2% 2.3%	No reliable data at this stage.		

<b>Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010</b>	<b>What do you know?</b> Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff		<b>What do people tell you?</b> Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	<b>What does this mean?</b> Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	<b>What can you do?</b> All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advance equality of opportunity,</li> <li>• eliminate discrimination, and</li> <li>• foster good relations</li> </ul>
	Widowed	8.6% 6.2%			

**Assessment of overall impacts and any further recommendations**

The United Kingdom committed to a target of net zero emissions by 2050, and proposed a ban on the sale of all polluting vehicles by 2035..<sup>5</sup>[Electric vehicle trends | Deloitte Insights](#)

This could mean that any impacts discussed in this assessment could increase in years to come.

**3. List detailed data and/or community feedback which informed your EqIA (If applicable)**

<b>Title</b> (of data, research or engagement)	<b>Date</b>	<b>Gaps in data</b>	<b>Actions to fill these gaps: who else do you need to engage with?</b> (add these to the Action Plan below, with a timeframe)


\*[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/464763/uptake-of-ulev-uk.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/464763/uptake-of-ulev-uk.pdf)

- **Office for National Statistic survey - 2020**

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/overhalfofyoungerdriverslikelytoswitchtoelectricinnextdecade/2021-10-25>

**4. Prioritised Action Plan (If applicable)**

Impact identified and group(s) affected	Action planned	Expected outcome	Measure of success	Timeframe
NB: These actions must now be transferred to service or business plans and monitored to ensure they achieve the outcomes identified.				

**EqIA sign-off:** (for the EQIA to be final an email must sent from the relevant people agreeing it or this section must be signed)

<b>Lead Equality Impact Assessment officer:</b>	<b>Corrine Crosbourne</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>22/12/21</b>
<b>Directorate Management Team rep or Head of Service:</b>	<b>Jess Khanom</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>22/12/21</b>



## East Herts Council Report

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of meeting:** 18<sup>th</sup> January 2022

**Report by:** Councillor Linda Haysey, Leader of the Council

**Report title:** Corporate Plan Refresh 2022/23

**Ward(s) affected:** All

### Summary

- This paper invites Committee Members to review and comment on Corporate Plan priorities ahead of them being adopted by Council alongside the 2022/23 budget

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:**

**A) To review and comment on the One Page Plan priorities (Appendix A);**

**B) To make recommendations to Executive on any proposed changes or amendments ahead of the plan being proposed to Council for adoption**

#### **1.0 Proposal(s)**

1.1 That the Corporate Plan priorities are reviewed ahead of being adopted at Full Council alongside the 2022-23 budget

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Council's Corporate Plan, "East Herts: A Place to Grow" was originally adopted in January 2020 and a refreshed version agreed by Council in July of 2021. The plan contains a high level summary against each of the four SEED themes. There are then a series of more detailed actions and indicators to help measure progress towards objectives. The full plan can be found here:  
<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=158&MIId=3914&J=2>
- 2.2 As part of 2021-22 year there are 85 actions and 75 Performance Indicators to help The Council monitor progress the SEED objectives. An update was provided to Overview and Scrutiny Members in November 2021 and a full report on progress will be provided in May 2022 as part of the Council's Annual Report.
- 2.3 Corporate plan priorities are refreshed on an annual basis, usually alongside budget considerations, to accommodate any changes in priorities. The 2021/22 refresh process was fairly substantial, incorporating new and additional activity related to Covid but remaining focused on the SEED structure and core priorities of the council. Executive Members have undertaken an initial review of the one page plan and the draft refreshed version can be found at Appendix A. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members are invited to review and comment.
- 2.4 Some of the issues that may affect priorities in the upcoming year could include the following:
- 2.5 The 2022/23 budget is quite challenging for East Herts District Council and the refresh process needs to be considered in this

context. The scope for new/ additional activity which has not been identified in the budget is very limited.

- 2.6 The capital programme remains in place and the proposed budget sets out how the commitments will be met. Key projects (such as Hertford Theatre and Old River Lane) are likely to continue to be priorities for the Council.
- 2.7 The Sustainability at the Heart of everything we do theme is monitored on a monthly basis and the key activities have changed substantially since the last refresh. A number of high level actions and priorities have been identified for the 2022/23 year. The full details of all the theme's activities can be found here: <https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/about-east-herts-0/environmental-sustainability/environmental-sustainability-action-plan>
- 2.8 Under the Enabling Communities theme a substantial amount of new activity was incorporated last year around addressing the impact of Covid and supporting national programmes such as enforcing restrictions and the vaccine roll out (see "keeping communities safe" objective). One-off funding was made available for much of this activity which expires on 31 March 2022. It is uncertain at this stage what the appetite will be from central government to continue funding this work throughout 2022 (even with the new Omicron variant) although East Herts will continue to support countywide and national programmes around vaccine take up.
- 2.9 Similar to the above the Encouraging Economic Growth theme had a strong focus on business support during Covid (eg. administration of grant funding). It is uncertain whether this will continue in 2022/23 however support to businesses will remain a priority.

2.10 There has been a substantial amount of activity around the Digital by Default theme in the past six months. Officers have begun a Transforming East Herts programme designed to save £1m over the next three years. There are six themes underneath the programme and a number of them have been added into the one page plan given the impact they may have on customers and staff:

- Lean Processes: looking at improving existing business and customer processes and encouraging more channel shift
- Modern Workforce Development: looking at new ways of working following the pandemic and getting the right skills for the future. This includes maximising benefits from the new blended working policy for staff
- Commercial Skills: looking at opportunities to generate more income.
- Modern Workspaces: looking at the use of our buildings. A key project within this strand will be an evaluation of our office requirements in terms of desks, meeting and flexible use spaces for the future. This will involve looking at options for reconfiguring Wallfields and letting part of it commercially. Another project will look at receptions/ front of house services in both Hertford and Bishop's Stortford and take an evidence based approach to ensuring our face to face offering is effective and efficient.
- Service Reviews: looking at overall quality of services and ensuring they are future proofed. This strand will provide a framework for how we review current services in terms of benchmarking performance with peers, reviewing customer feedback and agreeing expectations for quality against costs.
- Technology: looking at our hardware and software solutions. This strand will focus on supporting the roll out of Office 365, use of MS Teams as a tool for

communication and collaboration and ensuring staff have the right equipment to undertake their roles

- 2.11 Members invited to comment on priorities within the one page plan (see appendix A) and make recommendations to Executive for their consideration.
- 2.12 Following this meeting the Corporate Plan will be shared with Executive on the 8<sup>th</sup> February and Council on the 1 March alongside the proposed 2022/23 budget.

### **3.0 Reason(s)**

- 3.1 The report

### **4.0 Options**

- 4.1 N/A

### **5.0 Risks**

- 5.1 None

### **6.0 Implications/Consultations**

- 6.1 The annual consultation on what residents think of East Herts Council services concluded shortly before Christmas and the results can be found within the budget papers.

### **Community Safety**

No

### **Data Protection**

No

## **Equalities**

The SEED framework supports the delivery of East and Equal – the Council’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy

## **Environmental Sustainability**

The SEED framework outlines the Council’s proposed actions towards meeting its sustainability commitments

## **Financial**

The priorities can only be delivered with investment and details concerning spending are contained within the budget papers

## **Health and Safety**

No

## **Human Resources**

No

## **Human Rights**

No

## **Legal**

No

## **Specific Wards**

No

## **7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

**Appendix A** – One page plan

## **Contact Member**

Councillor Linda Haysey, Leader of the Council

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## East Herts: A Place to Grow

### DRAFT Corporate Plan Refresh for 2022/ 2023

The Council's Corporate Plan (2020/21 – 2023/24) was agreed in January 2020 and sets out a range of actions and objectives against 4 overall, 'SEED' priorities. Whilst the aspirations in that plan are still relevant Covid-19 has changed local, national and global priorities for public service delivery and impacted how and where East Herts Council is deploying its resources. This refreshed plan outlines amended objectives for the 2022/ 2022 year which better reflect the needs of the district in this context.

Each of the 'one page plans' for the 4 themes have been updated. New priorities have been included where relevant and actions which have either been completed or are now less relevant compared to one year ago have been removed. Please note that for each theme there is a wider set of actions and measures which sit underneath the one page plan.



### ***Sustainability at the heart of everything we do 2022/ 2023***

The council's work towards achieving its nine commitments for tackling climate change has continued at pace in 2021/22. Over the last 12 months the council has completed the redevelopment of Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre, minimising the building's carbon emissions by installing solar PV panels and a combined heat and power system, commissioned the installation of 59 additional e-vehicle chargers in council car parks (which will be ready to use by summer 2022) and run a food waste minimisation publicity scheme.

In 2022/23 we will publish an overarching Climate Change Strategy which will pull together how we are working with key partners in the county and beyond to promote sustainability in a cost effective way. In addition, we will focus on supporting residents to make positive changes to their behaviour.

<b>Strategy/ objectives</b>	<b>Actions/ key projects</b>
1. We will make changes to The Council's own premises, people and services we deliver	1a. Switch the council's fleet of diesel vans to electric vehicles. 1b. Publish a Climate Change Strategy including a proposed route map to the council's services being carbon neutral by 2030. 1c. Deliver sustainability upgrades at the remodelled Hartham Leisure Centre in Hertford.
2. Use our regulatory powers to promote action by others	2a. Publish revised Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document covering new development, including provision for e-v charging points at new residential properties and locations. 2b. Incorporate the findings of the Hertfordshire-wide Biodiversity Baseline Study into planning guidance. 2c. Implement stricter taxi emission requirements for all new vehicle applications and renewal applications.
3. Influence and encourage others to do things	3a. In partnership, seek external funding to introduce e-v chargers in more rural locations in the district. 3b. Promote domestic energy efficiency improvements supported by the national Local Authority Delivery 2 scheme and the domestic energy efficiency assessment. 3c. Work with Hertfordshire County Council and community groups to promote tree planting as part of the national Queen's Green Canopy initiative 3d. Promote The Council's E-car pool scheme to the public

***Enabling our communities 2022/ 2023***

Over the past 12 months we have kept up momentum on delivery of our capital programme demonstrating on-going commitment to the wellbeing of our communities. This includes the opening of our brand new £30m leisure centre at Grange Paddocks in Bishop’s Stortford and working with community groups to co-design and open the new play area at Hartham Common. The Council has also created a new portfolio for Communities and adopted an Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy in the summer of 2021 highlighting the need to understand and address the disproportionate impact that things like Covid has had in East Herts.

In a survey residents informed us that parks and open spaces are the service that they are most satisfied with and a major priority for 2022/23 will be the delivery of a new strategy reviewing use of these assets and ensuring their public health and leisure benefits are maximised where possible. We will also continue to focus on delivering our capital programme, whilst still delivering services to our most vulnerable residents. This will of course include supporting partners with Covid recovery efforts and rolling out the national vaccination programme.

<b>Strategy/ objectives</b>	<b>Actions/ key projects</b>
1. We will invest in our places	1a. Complete refurbishment of Hartham Leisure Centre 1b. Deliver £20m investment in Hertford Theatre 1c. Deliver the Castle Park project 1d. Deliver the Cultural Strategy
2. We will ensure all voices in the community are heard	2a. Grow our digital communications channels (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and Linked in) 2b. Deliver the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
3. We will support our vulnerable residents	3a. Further establish the East Herts Healthy Hub to promote access to health, social, wellbeing advice and support 3b. Provide specialist support to those facing or recovering from homelessness
4. Keeping communities safe	4a. Support national vaccination roll out with East Herts assets where possible 4b. Support national and county led communications campaigns on vaccine roll out and vaccine hesitancy 4b. Provide regulatory advice and support to businesses with post Covid recovery

### ***Encouraging economic growth 2022/ 2023***

Since the start of the pandemic we have given out £53m in grants to businesses affected by Covid. Our High Streets are under enormous pressure to recover and remain relevant and with changing patterns of workplace distribution we will face additional pressure on viability of commercial development. However this may also bring opportunities for the district and the 33 businesses that have opened up new premises in the last 6 months with our support indicates a healthy demand for economic growth.

Over 2022/23 we will continue to focus on delivery of major projects such as Old River Lane and our European Funded Launchpad 2 business support programme. Working in partnership with the County Council, Town Councils, police and businesses will be an important means of ensuring residents feel comfortable and confident when visiting their town centres. Continuing to work with developers on delivery of growth sites across the district and supporting communities with neighbourhood planning will be key to ensuring East Herts remains a vibrant place to live.

<b>Strategy/ objectives</b>	<b>Action/ key projects</b>
1. We will continue to support businesses and business growth	1a. Deliver the match funded ERDF Launchpad 2 project and continue to grow the Launchpad in Bishop's Stortford and Ware 1b. Continue to provide grant funding to businesses affected by Covid ( <i>Nb. This is contingent upon further government announcements on restrictions</i> )
2. We will support town centres with post Covid recovery	2a. Learning from the 20/21 pilot work in Hertford on developing a town centre vision and action plan in conjunction with stakeholders, support similar approaches in other towns
3. We will ensure development is viable	3a. Support the Herts Growth Board with presenting a case for additional infrastructure investment in Hertfordshire 3b. Complete construction of the multi-story car park on the Old River Lane site 3c. Deliver an SPD and Masterplan for the Old River Lane site 3d. Delivery of the strategic sites allocated in the District Plan in accordance with the housing trajectory.

***Digital by default 2022/ 2023***

Global changes in behaviour following the pandemic have accelerated the take up of digital services and this has been evident with the 92.5% take up of green waste by the website, 100% take up of business grant applications via webform and the increasing use of our appointment booking and web chat software. We will build on this impetus to further enhance the digital offer to residents and businesses aswell as internally to all our employees and elected representatives.

The Transforming East Herts programme is designed to save the council £1m over the next 3 years by automating more processes, streamlining the customer experience, being more commercial in our mindset and more creative with our office space and ways of working.

<b>Strategy/ objectives</b>	<b>Action/ key projects</b>
1. We will encourage greater use of the website and self-service for customers	1a. Expand use of the appointment booking system for customers who need to see us 1b. Expand use of the chatbot to help customers resolve their queries 1c. Review
2. We will work with partners to ensure our communities are digitally enabled	2a. Ensure fibre to the premise (FTTP) is provided on all new developments 2b. Support joint delivery of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town as a fully sustainable and digital 'place' 2c. Support the Digital Innovation Zone to lobby for investment in our towns and villages
3. Deliver the Transforming East Herts programme	3a. Creating modern workspaces 3b. Creating a modern workforce through new blended working arrangements 3c. Developing a more commercial approach to service delivery 3d. Investing in technology to software

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## East Herts Council Report

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of meeting:** 18<sup>th</sup> January 2022

**Report by:** Councillor Eric Buckmaster, Executive Member for Wellbeing

**Report title:** Healthy Hub East Herts (HHEH) Update Report

**Ward(s) affected:** All

### Summary

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

**A) That the Committee notes the content of the report and provides any observations or recommendations to the Executive Member for Wellbeing and the Head of Housing and Health.**

#### **1.0 Proposal(s)**

1.1 Committee members review progress of the HHEH to date and provide any observations or recommendations to the Executive Member for Wellbeing and Head of Housing and Health.

#### **2.0 Background**

2.1 Healthy Hub East Herts (HHEH) launched in March 2020, one week prior to the first Covid pandemic lockdown. At the time, HHEH had two physical locations (one in Wallfields and one at Charringtons) intended to be one stop shops for residents of East Herts to access health and wellbeing information.

- 2.2 HHEH has since moved on to a virtual platform and formed a network bringing together the council with a range of community organisations to offer health and wellbeing advice and support.
- 2.3 In 2021, the East Herts Social Prescribing service was merged with HHEH. HHEH continues to support clients and organisations accessing information and support through these channels
- 2.4 As face to face services resume, HHEH is now able to offer online information, sign up and referrals as well as face to face sessions through community providers. During 2021, eight HHEH online zoom sessions were run attracting 104 attendees covering topics from dementia friends awareness training sessions to healthy eating and emotional resilience.
- 2.5 In 2020-21 221 clients were supported through the Social Prescribing and HHEH approaches with the most common HHEH self-identified issues being mental health (31), Healthy Eating (19) and Physical Activity (15). Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, 121 have been supported through HHEH services. The current focus for services includes main advice areas being given around mental health, isolation and loneliness, debt advice, caring needs, housing issues and healthy lifestyle advice.
- 2.6 The latest collated statistics (up to quarter 3, 2021/22) are as follows:

<b>Engagement - number per channel</b>	<b>2021/22 year to date at Dec 2021</b>
Website visits	1133
Referrals	111



Self-referrals	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>1254</b>

<b>Issues (where specified) enquired about / being addressed / subject to signposting</b>	<b>2021/22 year to date at December 2021</b>
Mental health	8
Stress and anxiety	6
Health checks	4
Physical activity	6
Healthy eating	4
Loneliness and isolation	3
Long term conditions	3
Addiction recovery	1
Adults and children with learning disabilities	1
Carers support	1
Domestic abuse	1
Sexual health	1
Stop smoking	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

## 2.7 More recently:

- a new post of Community Wellbeing Support Officer has been appointed to on a fixed term basis for 12 months using Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Public Health funding. The officer came into post in January 2022.

- a new communications plan has been drafted to support HHEH messaging and raise the profile of the service. HHEH is also working with the council's Communications team and MCS Creative, an external marketing company, to develop a digital campaign to raise awareness of HHEH and encourage sign up.
- HHEH is now planning to have a physical presence in our communities. This will involve a number of targeted, face to face promotions, linking in with national and local health and wellbeing initiatives.

### **3.0 Reason(s)**

- 3.1 This report has been produced at the request of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and is intended to update members on the progress of HHEH to date. It does not seek any decisions.

### **4.0 Options**

- 4.1 Do not review progress – NOT RECOMMENDED as members have expressed a wish to be kept informed of the progress of HHEH and ongoing health and wellbeing initiatives in East Herts.
- 4.2 Review progress – RECOMMENDED so as to ensure HHEH continues to be supported and is able to effectively meet the needs of residents of East Herts.

### **5.0 Risks**

- 5.1 HHEH has previously been funded by a combination of HCC Public Health funding and internal council budgets. With increasing pressures on internal budgets, the need to source external funding to continue this initiative becomes more pressing. To work towards this, future funding has been

identified through HCC Public Health and discussions are under way with community organisations with a view to bidding for external grant funding, for example from the National Lottery.

- 5.2 While partner organisations are able to apply for funding through HHEH, all partner organisations are covered by their own indemnities and insurances and have their own funding streams. Delivery of projects and future funding for community initiatives do not pose a risk to the council with regards to this.

## **6.0 Implications/Consultations**

- 6.1 HHEH regularly undertakes consultation with Hertfordshire County Council's Public Health team, East Herts community organisations and East Herts residents.

### **Community Safety**

Good health and wellbeing is closely connected to the perception and fear of crime and the maintaining of effective community safety therefore the work of HHEH is likely to have a positive impact on community safety to some degree.

### **Data Protection**

The council's Information Governance and Data Protection Manager has been consulted on data collection and retention periods. A data sharing agreement is in place for the Healthy Hub network partners

### **Equalities**

Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken as appropriate as future projects and initiatives are developed through HHEH.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

HHEH asks partner organisations accessing funding to consider their carbon footprint and the impact of their project on the environment.

HHEH encourages all projects to be delivered in a way that takes account of environmentally sustainability.

### **Financial**

HHEH is mostly funded by resources made available to the council for such projects by HCC Public Health. HHEH has also been part funded previously by the council's own budgets. Internal funding is likely to come under significant pressure moving forward. Future funding through HCC has already been identified and HHEH is already working with community organisations with a view to accessing external grant funding.

### **Health and Safety**

No implications.

### **Human Resources**

No implications.

### **Human Rights**

No implications.

### **Legal**

No implications.

### **Specific Wards**

No.

## **7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

None.

**Contact Member**

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## East Herts Council Report

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 18 January 2022

**Report by:** Scrutiny Officer

**Report title:** Overview and Scrutiny – Draft Work Programme 2021/22

**Ward(s) affected:** All

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### Summary

- This report considers actions for inclusion in the committee's existing Draft Work Programme and proposes amendments to the ongoing Draft Work Programme.

### **RECOMMENDATION FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, that:**

**(A) the main agenda items for the next meeting be agreed;**

**(B) the proposed Consolidated Work Programme, included at Appendix A, be approved,**

#### **1.0 Proposal(s)**

1.1 The Appendix setting out the draft work programme is now presented as a single report.

1.2 In deciding what items the committee should consider, Members need to have regard to the Corporate and Forward Plans and what is due to be considered at the next Executive. The item on the agenda this evening is for consideration and

decision by the Executive on 8 February 2022.

- 1.3 Members will note that one item for information has been included as a separate agenda item this is East Herts Healthy Hubs - promoting easier access to health and wellbeing advice and support. This report is an update and does not have any recommendations to the Executive. In order to make best use of the Committee's time, this is not for discussion at the meeting itself unless, at the pre-meeting, Members feel that a recommendation should be made to the Executive, then the key officer / Head of Service will be invited to attend the meeting to provide advice to Members.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The draft agenda items for 2022 meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is shown in **Appendix A**. The timing of some items shown may have to change depending on availability of essential data (e.g. from central government) external sources and officers.
- 2.2 Members are reminded that for a topic to be valid for Scrutiny it needs to be relevant to the work of the council and impact on a number of residents / or the wider area. In addition, there needs to be evidence, whether readily quantifiable or anecdotal, that this is an issue requiring investigation.
- 2.3 Members are welcome to submit a scrutiny proposal at any time by completing a Scrutiny Proposal Form (available from the Scrutiny Officer) which will provide officers with sufficient information to assess if it is appropriate for Scrutiny and to ensure their specific questions are addressed. The Scrutiny Officer will then liaise with officers and the Scrutiny Chairman to consider the best way to address the subject and complete a scoping document.
- 2.4 Members are also asked whether there is any training relevant to scrutiny or to the function and remit of the Overview and



Scrutiny Committee that they wish to suggest.

### **3.0 Reason(s)**

3.1 This report provides an update on the current situation in relation to issues raised by Members.

### **4.0 Options**

4.1 The Work Programme will be kept under review by the committee throughout the coming year. It is worth noting that this is a draft work programme which is continually reviewed and will evolve as the work programme develops triggered by external and internal influences

### **5.0 Risks**

5.1 The establishment of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee is enshrined in the Local Government Act 2000 (section 9). The 2000 Act obliges local authorities to adopt political management systems with a separate Executive. Various sub sections (of the 2000 Act), set out the powers and duties for Overview and Scrutiny Committees including the right to investigate and make recommendations on anything which is the responsibility of the Executive. Legislative provisions can also be found in the Localism Act 2011 (Schedule 2) with options to retain or re-adopt a "committee system" (section 9B).

5.2 Potential risks arise for the council if policies and strategies are developed and/or enacted without sufficient scrutiny. Approval of an updated Work Programme contributes to the mitigation of this risk by ensuring key activities of the council are scrutinised.

### **6.0 Implications/Consultations**

6.1 Scrutiny is an important part of the local democratic process

and represents the interests of residents. It holds the Executive to account on behalf of residents and helps review and improve services and functions run by the Council and its local partners.

6.2 The proposed Work Programme has implications for Members' time and the resources of the council devoted to scrutinizing the issues included.

### **Community Safety**

No

### **Data Protection**

No

### **Equalities**

Yes – scrutiny of the services provided e.g. by registered providers of social housing will investigate how some of the most vulnerable people in the district, including those with protected characteristics, receive housing services.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

Yes – although not subject to a further Task and Finish Group, the proposed Work Programme envisages the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receiving reports on the progress of the council's Environmental and Climate Forum.

### **Financial**

No

### **Health and Safety**

No

### **Human Resources**

No

## **Human Rights**

No

## **Legal**

Yes - scrutiny is enshrined in Statute (the Local Government Act 2000) as amended by the Localism Act 2011.

## **Specific Wards**

No

## **7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

### **7.1 Appendix A – Draft Work Programme**

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## Overarching SEED theme: Sustainability at the heart of everything we do

Date	Report title	SEED Priority	Background information	Officer invitee	Portfolio Holder	Executive Date
18 January 2022	Housing strategy	“E” Enabling our communities	Refresh of the strategy	Jonathan Geall	Cllr Peter Boylan ( <i>Affordable Housing</i> ) and Cllr Jonathan Kaye ( <i>Resident Engagement</i> )	8 February 2022 1 March 2022 – Council
	Electric Vehicle Charging Policy			Jess Khanom-Metaman		
	Parks and Open Space Strategy	“E” Enabling our communities	We will invest in our places	Ian Sharratt	Cllr Eric Buckmaster ( <i>Leisure and Culture</i> )	8 February 2022
	Corporate Plan – refresh	All Seed Priorities	Refresh of the Strategy	Ben Wood	Cllr Graham McAndrew ( <i>Environment and Sustainability</i> )	8 February 2022
	East Herts Health Hubs – Promoting easier access to health and wellbeing advice and support	“E” Enabling our communities – Supporting our vulnerable residents	Requested by Cllr Curtis at O&S 7 September 2021  Information report agreed by O&S on 2 November 2021	Jonathan Geall and Simon Barfoot	Cllr Jonathan Kaye ( <i>Resident Engagement</i> )	

## Overarching SEED theme: Sustainability at the heart of everything we do

Date	Report title	SEED Priority	Background information	Officer invitee	Portfolio Holder	Executive Date
22 March 2022	Street Cleansing		Review of the waste and street cleansing contract	Jess Khanom-Metaman	Cllr Graham McAndrew (Waste)	
	Climate Change Strategy			Jonathan Geall	Cllr Graham McAndrew (Environment and Sustainability)	

## Overarching SEED theme: Sustainability at the heart of everything we do

	Digital Exclusion (as part of the Modern Workspaces aspects of the Transformation Programme)	“D” Digital by Default	As the Council moves away from what might be termed a traditional front of house, with more services taking place online or via automated options, what risk is there for residents in terms of digital exclusion and what should be done to protect against it?	Head of Comms to invite HCC – i.e. their Head of digital/ customer transformation) to talk about their approach? Report from comms on what we are currently doing, and/or a presentation on the night a discussion. Possible Recommendations to Executive about what digital exclusion means in EH and what we should be doing about it?	Cllr George Cutting ( <i>Customer Services</i> ), Cllr Jonathan Kay ( <i>Resident Engagement</i> )	
	Planning Services			Sara Saunders		
June 2022	RIPA - Update report		Note: Annual reports are good practice.	James Ellis	Cllr George Cutting ( <i>Legal Services</i> )	

## Overarching SEED theme: Sustainability at the heart of everything we do

	<p>Planning - How we are going to improve the [planning] service, considering the increase in work load?</p> <p>Requested by Chairman and Vice chairman</p>		<p>Note</p> <p>The Head of Planning has advised that the Planning Service is undergoing a restructure in March 2022 and its therefore suggested that this be deferred until June after the restructure has been implemented.</p>	<p>Head of Planning</p>		
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### Communications and Performance:

Suggestion at O&S on 2 November that Members would like to review the actions and comment/ discuss their relevance and appropriateness regarding Performance / Communications. Comms advise that there is an annual refresh of the corporate plan which runs alongside the budget. Head of Comms would welcome the help of O&S in helping inform this process and possibly make recommendations to Executive and Council on priorities.

**Last updated 4 January 2022** *Wproc\$/Stortford/BSWP/NPS/Overview and Scrutiny/2021 – 2021/Committee Work Programme Appendix*